

Resources & Assistance For Flood Victims

Porter County has issued an Local Disaster Emergency Declaration. This means the Porter County Board of Commissioners has determined that conditions are such that emergency services may not be provided to the public in a timely fashion and may be significantly delayed. A county emergency declaration initiates county emergency plans and allows additional resources to be provided by the state to assist local response efforts.

ONE-STOP DISASTER ASSISTANCE CENTERS

Porter County residents affected by severe weather and flooding will have convenient access to assistance, as the State of Indiana opens state assistance centers in Northern Indiana. The one-stop disaster centers will open the week of Monday, March 5. The state assistance centers most convenient for Porter County residents are:

Demotte, Indiana

Demotte Town Hall

112 Carnation Street SE, Demotte IN 46310

Open Tuesday and Thursday: 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Open Saturday: 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Lake Station, Indiana

Polk Elementary School Gymnasium

3460 Vermillion Street, Lake Station IN 46405

Open Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

The American Red Cross (ARC) and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) will be on site to deliver basic necessities for those needing food, water or clothing and other essential items.

State agencies will have representatives on site to provide immediate assistance and answer questions for those who have suffered a loss, including the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS), Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Department of Insurance (DOI), Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH), Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA), Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). The Indiana Office of Technology (IOT) and the Indiana State Police (ISP) will be providing additional support. These state services will be available:

- Housing Support: Listing of emergency shelters; listing of temporary housing; emergency housing and short-term rental assistance.
- Social Services: Replacement and emergency food stamps; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit cards; listing of available child care providers; mental health service referrals; mobile feeding; Red Cross and Salvation Army case work; health coverage application assistance.
- Unemployment Insurance: Apply for state unemployment benefits or Disaster Unemployment Insurance.
- Insurance Information – Interpretation of insurance policies by staff of the Indiana Department of Insurance; information on lost or damaged policies; information on obtaining copies of insurance policies; general insurance navigation advice and complaint resolution; car insurance assistance.
- Public Health Information: Clean up advice and education including mold removal and prevention; vaccination information, including tetanus shots; information regarding free well water testing; access and information to vital records such as birth and death certificates.
- Transportation Assistance: Vehicle title and registration replacement or apply for a salvage vehicle title via the BMV; replacement of driver licenses and identification cards.

- Agriculture: Representatives will be available to connect land owners and farmers to various local, State and federal assistance programs; erosion control mitigation and assistance-technical and possible financial assistance form BMP installation; logjam and agricultural field debris removal assistance; documentation and repair of damaged, existing conservation practices/structures; mapping/GIS support; damage surveys and documentation; support for animal and livestock issues.

Please note that some services and resources may be limited and may not always be available at all sites.

DAMAGE REPORTING

Residents should report UNINSURED flood damage through the State Of Indiana online portal located at <http://bit.ly/2018rainfall> This information is used for damage assessment purposes only and is part of the State's process to determine if damage is sufficient enough to request a disaster declaration from the President. Please document any Kankakee River flooding and damage, and don't throw away damaged property. If FEMA gets involved, they will need to physically inspect damage as well as have documentation of flooding.

Indiana residents with flood insurance should contact their insurance providers for instructions. State and local teams continue to conduct assessments and gather information, which began February 28, 2018. Teams from the American Red Cross are also assisting in damage assessment efforts. Assessments will continue in each county, until complete, at which time teams will continue to other affected counties.

ASSISTANCE HOTLINE

Through March 17, several relief agencies are staffing a free hotline for debris removal and home cleanup for Indiana residents. This hotline will connect those impacted by flooding with reputable and vetted relief agencies. All services are free, but not guaranteed due to an overwhelming need for assistance. Indiana residents needing assistance may call 800-415-1954.

SAFE TRAVEL

High water continues to require the closure of several roads in unincorporated Porter County, especially south of State Road 8. Do not ignore "high water" warning signs or drive around barricades closing roads for flooding.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS

- Well water in flood-affected areas may be contaminated with pathogens and be unsafe to consume. Residents who use wells should contact the local health department to coordinate testing to ensure their water sources are safe to drink.
- Mold is a real issue after a flood. Those affected should be instructed to remove any items from homes or businesses that have been wet for two or more days. A mixture of bleach and water (no more than one cup of bleach per gallon of water) can be used to on rigid surfaces such as countertops, floors, sinks and stoves and plastic toys. Mold can be growing and not be visible.
- Flood waters are not safe to swim in, play in or let pets and livestock be in. Flood waters contain various contaminants, chemicals and other dangerous pollutants that can make people and animals sick.
- No one who sees or experiences a disaster is untouched by it. Loss from flooding is no exception. Disaster stress and grief is normal, but there is help available if someone in the family needs mental health assistance/counseling. For information on human services, please visit the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration (FSSA). A list of counties with FSSA offices can be found online at <http://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/2999.htm>

FLOOD SAFETY AND CLEANUP

The Red Cross has provided steps for people to follow if their community is affected by flooding:

- People should stay away from flood water. If someone comes across an area where water is above their ankles, they should stop, turn around and go another way. If they encounter a flooded road while driving, they should also turn around and go another way. If the car is caught in rising water, they should get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground.
- It is important to be especially cautious at night when it is harder to see flood dangers.
- Children are curious and should be kept out of the water.
- Continue listening to local radio or television stations or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions. If away from home, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Before entering the home, look outside for loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damages.
- If the smell of natural or propane gas is present or a hissing sound is audible, leave immediately and call the fire department.
- If power lines are down outside the home, do not step in puddles or standing water.
- Make sure all food and water is safe. Discard items that have come in contact with flood water.
- When in doubt, throw it out!
- During cleanup, wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.

BE CAREFUL OF SCAMS

In the aftermath of flooding and other natural disasters, property owners are vulnerable -- making perfect targets for scammers pretending to offer help cleaning up wreckage and making necessary repairs. Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill recommends the following when working with someone offering services:

- Avoid agreeing to any repair or restoration work on the spot during initial contact with someone offering services – this includes contracts.
- Avoid signing any legally binding agreements without first gathering information and researching a business being represented.
- Obtain information about the individual offering his or her services.
- Research the company the individual claims to represent.
- Look for signs of credibility such as an official website.
- Seek reviews and testimonials from former customers.

For more information about actions before, during and after flooding, visit www.GetPrepared.in.gov