BOOTS ON THE GROUND: Flash Flooding

By Daniel Dorman, Emergency Management Coordinator,
Lycoming County Department of Public Safety

On October 21, 2017, the Lycoming County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated for Flash Flooding. My name is Dan Dorman and I had been on the job for less than six months as the county Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) so the whole event was somewhat of a lesson for me.

This was a unique event to Lycoming County with respect to the fact that hours earlier, this seemed to be merely a line of heavy strong thunderstorms but they were moving and nobody had any idea that they would stall and impact a very rural area.

We learned a few lessons during this event. First is that a fall rural flooding event is going to impact areas that do not always have year round residents that would have traditional TV, radio, and phone alerts and notifications. Many people in the affected areas were in seasonal cabins which made modern notifications impossible. Some people in cabins woke up to find water on their floors which was their first sign of flooding.

Second, flooding normally affects larger rivers and is caused by periods of heavy rain over a long period of time. This was not typical because the flooding only affected smaller streams because the rain was not wide-spread. Once the water from the small streams reached the larger creeks and later the river, it did not produce flooding, so some of our usual downstream concerns never happened.

Our EOC is located on Warrensville Road and at one point the water crossed this road. A couple of key EMA staff could not reach their workplace at that point so our back-up EOC was placed into service. Eventually the water receded and everyone was in one EOC.
LYCOMING COUNTY (continued from page 1)

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Lesson 1
Identify alternate warning and alert methods for areas that do not always have year-round residents or traditional communications methods such as telephone, television, and radio.

2. Lesson 2
There is financial assistance beyond the Federal disaster assistance programs. Use your county assets such as your planning office for help in obtaining assistance and Volunteer Agencies Active in Disaster (VOAD).

3. Lesson 3
Provide a single source for disaster and recovery information so residents do not have to seek answers from different agencies, or individuals.

Because the areas where the storm hit were rural, damage assessment was difficult to judge. Early on we did not believe we would qualify for any assistance based on the affected population. It seemed like it was so isolated that it would struggle to add up to a significant dollar value and there was not a large geographic area of the state affected. In the end, there was enough damage to receive a federal declaration for Public Assistance. We learned the value of our planning office as they were able to look beyond the federal disaster programs, which did not qualify, and at least offer some hope for struggling residents and aided the soil conservation office with remediation programs.

With the small amount of homes affected, the County put together recovery centers for people to try to receive assistance. Typically, for larger events, we would have one large recovery center. However, due to the rural nature we brought the agencies to the affected areas.

We did find, in many cases, that people were looking everywhere for solutions. Keep clear and thorough records of who you are talking to. Residents talk to local officials first as they are directed to. Once the residents have exhausted that, they go anywhere anyone will listen. In a lot of ways we start to look like a dog chasing its tail. Many times victims don't tell elected officials who they have spoken to already. We then get a call from the county commissioner one day, then a state representative the next day only to find out that it is all the same person looking for help. They all give them hope and in a lot of cases it all came back to the EMA office where we again had to call say we couldn’t offer anything.

As a final lesson to note - if you are offered a ride in a helicopter and not accustomed to wind and looking at things from the air, keep an emesis bag handy!

For more information, contact:
Daniel Dorman, Emergency Management Coordinator
Lycoming County Department of Public Safety
Phone: (570) 433-4461
Email: ddorman@lyco.org
http://www.lyco.org/Public-Safety

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Wallis Run Creek © NPR
**PEMA’s Update on the Opioid Disaster Declaration and Opioid Operational Command Center to the County Emergency Management Coordinators and 9-1-1 Coordinators**

**Most Recent Efforts**

- Governor Tom Wolf continued his administration’s fight against the opioid epidemic by unveiling the [opioid data dashboard](#). The opioid data dashboard focuses on data sets in the three main areas distinguished by Governor Wolf in his disaster declaration: **prevention, rescue and treatment**. It also shows data at the county-level.

- Partner State agencies working on the opioid epidemic have been increasing efforts in the fight against prescription drug abuse in multiple areas, including numerous programs and initiatives:
  - Working with the legislature to establish a new law limiting the number of opioids that can be prescribed to a minor and to individuals discharged from emergency rooms to seven days
  - Strengthening the [PDMP](#) through the legislative process so that doctors are required and able to check the system each time they prescribe opioids and benzodiazepines
  - Forming new [prescribing guidelines](#) to help doctors who provide opioid prescriptions to their patients, including guidelines specific to orthopedics and sports medicine
  - Creating the [warm handoff guideline](#) to facilitate referrals from the emergency department to substance abuse treatment
  - Collaborate with the legislature to establish education curriculum on safe prescribing for medical schools
  - Awarding [four $1 million grants for medication-assisted treatment](#) using a hub and spoke model for Pennsylvanians who are uninsured, under-insured or have private insurance

**Resource Links**


PA DDAP, Opioid/Heroin reversal (Naloxone): [http://www.ddap.pa.gov/overdose/Pages/Naloxone_Reversal.aspx](http://www.ddap.pa.gov/overdose/Pages/Naloxone_Reversal.aspx)

PA Department of Health, Free Naloxone: [http://www.health.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx#.WnOL8jgo7IU](http://www.health.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx#.WnOL8jgo7IU)

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**13 Initiatives**

(As directed in the Declaration)

1. Opioid Operational Command Center
2. Naloxone Leave Behind by EMS
3. Allow Pharmacists to Partner with Other Organizations to Increase Access to Naloxone
4. Expand access to PDMP and other Commonwealth Entities for Clinical Decision-Making Purposes
5. Rescheduling of Fentanyl Derivatives to align with DEA schedule
6. Add overdoses and NAS as reportable conditions in Title 28, Chapter 27
7. Waive the face to face physician requirement for NTP Admissions
8. Authorize Emergency purchase under procurement code for long term hotline contract with current vendor
9. Allow expansion of medication units for satellite NTPs
10. Waive Annual Licensing Requirements for High Performing NTPs
11. Streamline a pilot program using advanced body scanner
12. Waive fees for birth certificates for individuals with OUD
13. Waive separate licensing requirement for hospitals to expand access to drug and alcohol treatment
SPOTLIGHT - JEFFERSON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Groundhog Day is a popular tradition in the United States, celebrated annually on February 2nd. On this day, February 2nd, that the groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter’s sleep to look for his shadow. If he sees it, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his burrow. If the day is cloudy (shadow less), Punxsutawney Phil takes it as a sign of spring and stays above ground.

The trek to Gobbler’s Knob in Punxsutawney, Jefferson County has occurred every year for the past 132 years. The Inner Circle, a group of members of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, are the keepers and caretakers of Punxsutawney Phil. Since the first trek in 1886, the tradition has been kept alive and is attended by visitors from all over the world.

Initially, Groundhog Day was attended by just a handful of people, but is now attended thousands today. The movie “Groundhog Day” in 1993 put Punxsutawney and Jefferson County on the world-wide stage, which took this from a local event to international fame, as many put it on their bucket list to visit Punxsutawney on Groundhog Day. In the past year, a Broadway musical, Groundhog Day, has sparked the interest of a new generation to someday participate in the activities.

Punxsutawney has a population of around 6,000 residents. Located in the southern part of Jefferson County, the county itself has a total population of around 45,000. Assisting with the planning of this event is the staff of the Jefferson County Department of Emergency Services (DES).

Each year, the department meets with event coordinators, the Punxsutawney Police Department, the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), and other local agencies and groups to prepare for a safe event. Around 100 law enforcement officers are needed to keep everyone safe. This includes PSP, local municipal departments, including neighboring mutual aid police, fire police, and Radio Emergency Associated Communication Teams (REACT) traffic control personnel.

PSP, Troop C is the lead law enforcement for the area known as Gobbler’s Knob. It is located in Young Township just south of the Borough of Punxsutawney. The Borough is protected by the Punxsutawney Borough Police. This event has the potential of doubling the population of Jefferson County for a 24-hour period; which overwhelms the local resources, which normally protect this area. Jefferson County DES works with leaders from all agencies and organizations to prepare for and support this event and to provide any unmet needs that are identified prior to the event.

One of the main support elements for the county is the Northwest Central Pennsylvania Emergency Response Group, comprising Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Elk, McKean and Jefferson counties. For this event, each one of the task force counties commits personnel and equipment in support of the operations.
SPOTLIGHT - JEFFERSON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
(continued from page 4)

Four Mobile Command/Communication trailers are deployed at different locations throughout the Punxsutawney area, where as many as 90 school buses pick up people who wish to participate at the event. Keep in mind, the majority of this operation occurs after midnight and is usually concluded by 9:00 a.m.

Law enforcement is set up near the trailers where they check participants and personal belongings to make sure no contraband such as alcohol, drugs or weapons are brought on the school buses and transported to Gobbler’s Knob. The task force also supplies multiple portable lighting trailers that are set at different traffic control points to keep these areas well-lit for security reasons. Additional support and equipment such as barricade trailers, additional lighting trailers, message boards and personnel from the Northwest Pennsylvania Emergency Response Group and Region 13 assist. In total, about 12 of the Western Pennsylvania counties assist Jefferson County with this operation.

Throughout Groundhog Day eve, people from all over the world start funneling into Punxsutawney awaiting the big day. This has the potential to overwhelm the local police department where normally two officers are on duty during a shift. Other municipal police departments from surrounding communities and counties, as well as the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department and State Police help to patrol the borough. Because of the added departments from outside the county, the Department of Emergency Services, 9-1-1 staff, coordinates the radio communications between all entities. Through coordination from PEMA Western Region, camera support trailers are utilized at different locations throughout the area with the cameras being watched at the command post.

Traffic in the area of Gobbler’s Knob is limited the hours before the event to bus traffic and emergency vehicles only. Most roadways are changed from two way roads to one way only, which puts a burden on emergency medical service (EMS) units trying to transport patients to the hospital. The Department coordinates with the local EMS service, Jefferson County EMS (not affiliated with Jefferson County) and EMS West, the regional EMS council, to provide a medical treatment and warming tent set up at Gobbler’s Knob. These tents are manned by doctor and nurses from the Punxsutawney Area Hospital, local EMT’s and paramedics, EMS strike team members and the EMS council.
The entire operation is overseen by the command and general staff located at one of the fire stations within Punxsutawney Borough. Each of the locations where the command/communications trailers are located are staffed by task force county staff and support personnel from PEMA Western Region, the EMS Council, and law enforcement. Each of these locations are designated as a specific division and reports back to the command post. Command staff monitor weather conditions, track resources through the Knowledge Center and with the use of “T” cards, prepare updated Incident Action Plan (IAP) for the four operational periods as well as keeping updated situational awareness. The National Weather Service – Pittsburgh reporting office is a key player in providing updated weather information that helps command staff in the decision process as well as support staff from the Knowledge Center. As one of the Inner Circle members have stated regarding the weather, “Regardless, the show will go on!”

It is everyone’s intent to have a safe and enjoyable experience when attending the Groundhog Day activities. Groundhog Day has been the topic of multiple tabletop and functional exercises that assist with the planning process, hosted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security, and locally. The Jefferson County Department of Emergency Services is grateful for the cooperation between all agencies and their help in having a successful operation. We truly could not do it without them.

**HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY 9-1-1**

On February 16, 2018, the national 9-1-1 emergency communications system turns 50 years old. As early as 1957, the International Association of Fire Chiefs recommended a single number for reporting fires. It took 10 more years before action was taken, after two other groups recommended a single number for emergencies such as calling an ambulance.

The first 9-1-1 call was made on February 16, 1968 Haleyville, Alabama. Six days later and across the continent, the second 9-1-1 call was made in Nome, Alaska, but it was decades before the majority of the country had access to the system we are familiar with today.

Technology and necessity has forced the 9-1-1 system to change over the years, and it continues to evolve today as we move forward on FirstNet and Next Generation 9-1-1. Technology is advancing faster than ever and we should expect 9-1-1 capabilities to keep pace.

Fifty years of 9-1-1 availability has saved countless lives. To honor the people staffing these centers day and night, the country celebrates National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, which was established by the United States Congress in 1991. Please join us April 9th thru April 13th, 2018 in recognition of these telecommunicators who work tirelessly with emergency services to keep our Commonwealth safe. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for the hours they put in calmly managing emergencies of all sizes.
FLOOD INSURANCE MYTHS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports that flooding will cause several billion dollars of property damage in the United States every year. Here are a few myths that people believe to be true about flood insurance.

**MYTH: Homeowners insurance policies cover flooding.**
**FACT:** Unfortunately, many home and business owners do not find out until it is too late that their homeowners and business multiperil policies do not cover flooding. A separate policy to cover flood damage is needed.

**MYTH: You can’t buy flood insurance if your property is not located in a high-flood risk area (flood plain).**
**FACT:** You are not only eligible to purchase flood insurance if you home is not located in a high-flood risk area, but your rates will be significantly discounted compared to those who do live in a flood plain. This coverage is known as “Preferred Risk Policy” or PRP and the average cost is approximately $395 per year.

**MYTH: Only residents of high-flood risk areas need to insure their property.**
**FACT:** All areas are susceptible to flooding, although to varying degrees. If you live in a low-to-moderate flood risk area, it is advisable to have flood insurance. Nearly 25 percent of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) claims come from outside high-flood risk areas. Residential and commercial property owners located in low-to-moderate risk areas should ask their agents if they are eligible for the Preferred Risk Policy, which provides inexpensive flood insurance protection. Property owners should also consider private flood insurance.

**MYTH: Flood insurance is only available for homeowners.**
**FACT:** Most people who live in NFIP participating communities, including renters and condo unit owners, are eligible to purchase federally backed flood insurance. A maximum of $250,000 of building coverage is available for single-family residential buildings; $250,000 per unit for residential condominiums. The limit for contents coverage on all residential buildings is $100,000, which is also available to renters. Commercial structures can be insured to a limit of $500,000 for the building and $500,000 for the contents. The maximum insurance limit may not exceed the insurable value of the property.

**MYTH: You can only buy flood insurance through the NFIP.**
**FACT:** Private market flood insurance is increasingly available. In many cases, private insurance may be less expensive than a comparable NFIP policy. Information on both private market and NFIP insurance is available at http://www.insurance.pa.gov/Coverage/Pages/Flood.aspx.
FLASH FLOODING: A CASE STUDY

Pennsylvania Flood Safety Awareness Week is March 26th through the 30th. To help understand flooding, the National Weather Service has provided this valuable information, including a case study of a 2016 flash flooding event in Connellsville, PA.

Extreme precipitation is a hazard in nearly all parts of the world, but the amount of rain that might be considered “extreme” varies widely. The topography, characteristics of the land surface, and human changes to the landscape within Pennsylvania makes the state very susceptible for flash flooding. Except for heat related fatalities, more deaths occur from flooding than any other hazard. Why? Most people fail to realize the power of water. For example, six inches of fast-moving flood water can knock you off your feet.

While the number of fatalities can vary dramatically with weather conditions from year to year, the national 30-year average for flood deaths is 127. That compares with a 30-year average of 73 deaths for lightning, 68 for tornadoes and 16 for hurricanes.

National Weather Service data also show:

- Nearly half of all flash flood fatalities are vehicle-related
- The majority of victims are males
- Flood deaths affect all age groups

Most flash floods are caused by slow moving thunderstorms. When thunderstorms move repeatedly over the same area or heavy rains from tropical storms and hurricanes, a great amount of rain can fall leading to flooding. These floods can develop within minutes or hours depending on the intensity and duration of the rain, the topography, soil conditions and ground cover. Flash floods can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings and bridges, and scour out new channels. Rapidly rising water can reach heights of 30 feet or more. Furthermore, flash flood-producing rains can also trigger catastrophic mud slides.

A recent flash flood event happened the summer of 2016 in Connellsville, Fayette County. The weather pattern was rather typical of late August, with sprawling high pressure over the eastern third of the United States. As would be expected in such a pattern, the wind across many layers of the atmosphere was relatively weak. Although not record-breaking, the atmospheric moisture content was in the highest 10 percent of historically-observed moisture content values from August 28th through 29th. The seasonably-warm day led to considerable atmospheric instability developing in the layer of the atmosphere below 14000 feet above ground level (AGL) (Approximately 600mb pressure) which is a key ingredient for tropical-caliber rainfall efficiency (a large amount of small rain drops instead of fewer large drops).
CONNELSVILLE, PA: 2016 FLOODING
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

An upper-level disturbance was present north of the region, but the atmospheric sounding sampled at 7:00 p.m. on August 29th indicated that some influence from this disturbance was felt at least as far south as Pittsburgh, helping to lift the warm, moist surface air upward.

Given the atmospheric instability, modest upward motion and abundant atmospheric moisture, scattered storms formed, mainly in the vicinity of the higher terrain (typical in such summer-time patterns). With a weak wind field, storms moved very slowly and crossed the same area, producing intense rainfall in a short period of time.

Occasionally, floating debris (or even ice in winter) can accumulate at a natural or man-made obstruction and restrict the flow of water. Water held back by this debris dam can cause flooding upstream. Subsequent flash flooding can occur downstream if the obstruction should suddenly release.

It’s important that emergency managers continue to spread the message of flood safety awareness. Whether you are driving or walking, if you come to a flooded road, Turn Around...Don’t Drown! You will not know the depth of the water nor will you know the condition of the road under the water.

Thank you to Fred McMullen, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service—Pittsburgh, for providing this article. For further information, go to www.weather.gov/pittsburgh.

http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/water/tadd
Are you looking toward the future of emergency management? Are you look for new ideas and innovations to address the next 20 years? The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in conjunction with its federal partners have developed a video series entitled PrepTalks.

Each PrepTalk release will include videos of the presentations and question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions, a Discussion Guide related to the topic, and additional resources. PrepTalks Discussion Guides are companion documents to the PrepTalk videos. When used together, these guides help translate the research and expertise showcased in each presentation into action steps to improve disaster preparedness.

Here is a list of currently available PrepTalks with link to the site:

- Land Use Planning for Community Resilience - Dr. Philip Berke
- Who’s at Risk? Rapid Mapping of Potential Hazard Exposure - Dr. Robert Chen
- Social Capital in Disaster Mitigation and Recovery - Dr. Daniel Aldrich
- The Next Pandemic: Lessons from History - John M. Barry
- Modernizing Public Warning Messaging - Dr. Dennis Mileti

For further information on PrepTalks and a listing of the upcoming presentations, log into PrepTalks at: www.fema.gov/preptalks.

**PENNSYLVANIA DISASTER IN HISTORY**

A COAL MINE CAVES IN AT RAVEN RUN, PA.

TEN MEN BURIED, WITH NO HOPE OF SAVING THEM.

Shenandoah, April 6. -- This afternoon one of the gangways of the Cuyler Colliery, at Raven Run, operated by S. M. Heaton & Co., caved in without warning entombing ten miners. The cave in was caused by a sudden crashing of the timbers.

The entombed men all have families, and the cries of the wives and children fill the air. Exploring parties report the mine a complete wreck, and all hope of rescuing the imprisoned miners alive has been abandoned. The slope is seven hundred feet deep, and is divided into four lifts. The ten men now in the mine were in the lower lift, and the place is closed to the bottom.

*Marion Daily Star Ohio 1885-04-08*
VOAD HIGHLIGHT

Team Rubicon is an international non-profit disaster response organization that unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy disaster response teams free of charge to communities affected by disasters. Team Rubicon currently maintains a roster of 71,000 volunteers. For major incidents, Team Rubicon stands able to deploy volunteers in the following mobilization times:

Within 24 hours; 10 volunteers; Within 48 hours: 20 volunteers; Within 96 hours; 30 + volunteers.

Team Rubicon shows up equipped with everything we need to get the job done — if we don’t have what we need, we resource it in the community. Getting the job done includes the capabilities below plus personal protective equipment; hand tools; solar-powered electrical suites; Palantir intelligence analysis; and mapping suite (in mobile and static platforms). All incident management personnel are trained in the application of Incident Command System (ICS) in compliance with the National Incident Management System. Volunteers are trained in the basics of ICS. Team Rubicon deploys as a self-sustaining unit.

Incident Management (for each operation); Damage & Impact Assessment; Disaster Mapping and Work-Order Management; Incident Management; Assistance Teams; Debris Management; General Debris Removal; Chainsaw Operations; Light and Heavy Vehicle Operations; Structure Demolition; Emergent/Hasty Home Repair; Roof Tarping; Muck-Out; Hazard Mitigation (Fire/Flood); Spontaneous Volunteer Management; Planning for multiple VOADs; and Volunteer Reception Center.

Team Rubicon maintains complete records of volunteers, hours worked, and work-orders so as to assist local, county, state, and tribal governments in applying for federal public assistance grants. (Note: Depending on assigned task(s) from city, county, or state government, and concurrence by Team Rubicon Headquarters, volunteer numbers can be scaled significantly.)

The best time to reach out to Team Rubicon is before the storm.

Email Jonah Thompson at: thompson@teamrubiconusa.org to learn who the leaders are in your community.

https://teamrubiconusa.org
# UPCOMING TRAINING

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All PEMA courses are on Train PA. and you must register for courses through Train PA.

If you already have an account in, please enter your Login Name and Password in the fields provide on the left menu and click “Login.”

Looking for a course? TRAIN PA uses simple course name prefixes to help you easily find trainings geared toward you! Just type the course name prefix into the Search by Keyword or Course ID field and click the search button.

If this is your first visit, click "Create Account" on the left menu to register for TRAIN PA and start learning today! Be sure to opt in to emails so that you can receive important messages.

For help, please contact TRAINPAsupport@pa.gov
Need Ideas For Getting The Word Out?

Each month, the PEMA External Affairs Office distributes numerous preparedness resources designed to help make communicating to your communities about preparedness easy. We encourage everyone to share this valuable information with their partner agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, family and friends.

These tools are emailed each month and are also available on at www.ready.pa.gov.

**ReadyPA Monthly** - Community preparedness information designed for citizens. Forward to libraries, schools, local municipalities, etc.

**Fact Sheets** - One-page preparedness material about a specific hazard. Please make this easily printed information available to your community members, elected officials, civic organizations, and anyone who could benefit from this valuable information.

**Talking Points and Social Media Toolkit** - Graphics, tweet suggestions, and talking points for you to use on social media, websites, and when speaking to groups.

**Featured Emergency Manager Tool.**

Each newsletter, we will be featuring a resource that you can use to assist in your response and recovery efforts. The first tool is the Day 2 Checklist. This checklist provides recommendations for emergency management personnel and municipal leaders to follow during “day 2” of response and recovery operations. It is intended to be a base document that can be modified by any user to incorporate their individual needs. Please make this available to your municipal coordinators. You can download the checklist by clicking on the picture on the right or by going to: www.pema.pa.gov and clicking on the “Day 2 Checklist” under the “Popular” heading.

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