

Municipal Guidance for Flood Emergencies: Franklin and Berkshire Counties Massachusetts

Deborah Shriver, August 2016



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Cover photo: Turbulent flows on the Deerfield River at TransCanada Number 3 Dam at Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, taken on August 28, 2011, during flood flows from Tropical Storm Irene. Photograph © by John Elder Robison (<http://www.johnrobison.com>).

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Table of Contents

Advance Preparations I: Have these in place	1
Advance Preparations II: Major storm is forecast with high risk of flooding	6
During the Storm	8
Recovery	10
Acronyms	13



Hawlemont ball fields after Tropical Storm Irene (Carrie Banks, MA DER)

Advance Preparations I: Have these in place

Training

- Building Commissioners, Agents for Boards of Health, Emergency Management Directors (EMDs), Planners and others are eligible to receive free trainings through the Department of Homeland Security (<https://cdp.dhs.gov/>). Programs are available for flood response and other emergencies. (Transportation, room, board and program costs are paid for by DHS.)
 - Additional free online courses are available through the DelValle Institute (<https://delvalle.bphc.org/>) and the Local Public Health Institute of MA (<http://sites.bu.edu/masslocalinstitute>).
- Town Administrator/EMD: Town selectboard, fire, police, highway, public health, DPW, Emergency Management Directors and emergency personnel are required to have Incident Command System (ICS) training, available through FEMA (<http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/index.htm>). ICS provides a consistent framework and process for responding to emergencies among local, state, federal agencies non-profit sectors and faith-based organizations. Western Mass Ready (<http://westernmassready.org/?s=ics&submit>) has videos on emergency preparedness including ICS 100 – 700 level classes. Contact Tracy Rogers, Regional Preparedness Program Manager at FRCOG (regionalprep@frcog.org; 413-774-3167, ext. 118) or Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager (lkittross@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521 x 32) at Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for more information.
- Selectboard/Town Staff: Oversee preparation of flood inundation maps based on knowledge of the Highway Department and police. Know which roads, bridges and culverts are at risk. Maintain hard copies with highway department and police.
- Contact FRCOG's Tracy Rogers (<http://frcog.org/boards-committees/franklin-county-citizen-corps/>) or Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager (lkittross@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521 x 32) for information on municipal trainings for emergencies, the Medical Reserve Corps, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), the Disaster Animal Response Team, the Region 1 Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition and the Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD).

- COAD brings together organizations from many sectors of the community: primarily nonprofit agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations. During or after a disaster, local public safety officials can call on COAD members to provide support in response or recovery efforts. The COADs have a joint Emergency Operations Plan and are now using that plan and becoming self-sustaining entities. For assistance in the Pioneer Valley or the Berkshire COAD contact Michael Nelson, 413-485-8627.
- EMD: Prepare to manage volunteers and donations that are not associated with existing volunteer support groups. The Western Mass. Region Homeland Security Advisory Council has prepared training and a plan for communities to manage Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers (<http://wrhsac.org/projects-and-initiatives/spontaneous-unaffiliated-volunteers-training-series/>).

Roles:

- Selectboard/Town Staff: Annually appoint an Emergency Management Director (EMD). Every community is required to have an EMD. An EMD oversees all preparations for an emergency response. In an event the EMD will coordinate local actions, mobilize local resources and act as the primary point of contact for coordination with other communities and between state and local agencies.
- Selectboard/Town Staff: Designate and train a public information officer (PIO) – someone who will monitor the media, collect information, create press releases and assist the incident or municipal spokesperson to issue statements to the media during emergencies. Have a list of local media contacts available and keep it up to date.
- Board of Health: Flooding can produce many public health risks including contaminated buildings, water supplies and food and the potential for disease outbreaks. Be prepared to work with your health department, state and federal agencies to diminish these risks.

Emergency Operations Center

- EMD: Ensure that the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is adequately equipped with emergency radio capability to communicate with EMD, police, fire, highway department vehicles and selectboard. The EOC should be located outside of known flood zones and other hazards and have a back-up power source and technology capable of maintaining communication.

Sheltering

- Selectboard/Town Staff: Know where potential local shelters are and as much as possible, designate them in non-flood zones. Prior designation of a shelter requires full compliance with MA codes. The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (<http://wrhsac.org/resources/resource-documents/>) has a template for a shelter plan including checklists. Some communities have regional shelter agreements with neighboring towns. (Greenfield and Montague have full-time staff and can open a fully compliant shelter.)
- When establishing a shelter, consider individuals with functional needs, pets and back-up power.
- During an event, a town may activate an emergency shelter using an automated calling system such as Code Red or other reverse calling system. It does not have to be in compliance with MA codes.
- For training on Food Safety in Emergencies contact Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager (lkittross@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521 x 32) at Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for more information.
- For information on the Medical Reserve Corps Units in Western Mass, go to www.wmmrc.org.

Recovery

- Highway Department: Have pre-bid contracts for large equipment, materials (gravel, rock) and contractor services to avoid procurement delays. Have pre-bid contracts for debris removal. Can bid once a year.
 - Maintain a highway department equipment list. After a storm event, reimbursement may be available for use of backhoes, dump trucks, etc.
 - If one is not in place, set up a system to keep a detailed record of town infrastructure repair costs. This information is important for obtaining grant funding for repairs, upgrades or retrofits.
- Have a MA DEP pre-approved debris management site. Without an approved plan, reimbursements from FEMA may be delayed or denied. The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) is creating a template for an approved municipal debris management plan and site (expected to be ready by November 2016). Franklin County has a regional debris management plan that each town selectboard can adopt (contact Tracy Rogers at FRCOG;

Regional Preparedness Program Coordinator;
regionalprep@frcog.org; 413-774-3167, ext. 118).

- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission expects to have the WRHSAC template by spring 2017 to assist communities in planning for disasters. (Contact Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager (lkittross@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521 x 32).
- Contact the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and establish a relationship with the Local Coordinator prior to an event (Bob Barry, Robert.D.Barry@massmail.state.ma.us; 413-750-1404).

Records

- EMD: Know your town's vulnerable populations and their needs during events when power may be out or roads closed for extended periods of time. Vulnerable populations include the young, the old, those with medical conditions, those who may not hear or understand English, and those without transportation or other resources.
- Building Commissioner: Be aware of buildings that are subject to inundation.
- Departments maintain lists of extra police and highway equipment drivers who can be called upon in an emergency.

Town Plans/Policies/Website

- Selectboard/Town Staff: Be sure your town has an updated, available Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) as required by MEMA (<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/state-cem-plan.html>). The CEMP describes actions to be taken by local entities for emergency management, assigns responsibility, defines authority and outlines coordination mechanisms with other communities and the Commonwealth. It should integrate with the Incident Command System (ICS). Have hard copies of CEMP available for appropriate parties.
- Selectboard/Town Staff: Make sure you have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in place so that basic municipal services can be maintained during an emergency.
- Selectboard/Town Staff: Be familiar with the mechanism to declare a State of Emergency and have a template declaration ready to be filled in during an emergency. A template in Word can be found on FRCOG's website (<http://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Local-Emergency-Declaration-Template.doc>).

- Know under what conditions you will declare a flood emergency and what indicators you will use.
- Town Administrator/EMD: Create “dark pages” on the Town website that include emergency contact numbers and other emergency information that can be activated during emergencies.
- Selectboard: Create a Town policy discussing expectations of staff during emergencies. Is everyone expected to pitch in? Will they get paid overtime or be provided comp time after the disaster is over? (Studies show that communities that provide reciprocity for staff are more likely to retain them after the event.)



photo credit: Lars Gange & [Mansfield Heliflight](#)

Advance Preparations II: Major storm is forecast with high risk of flooding

Highway Department:

- Ready "Road Closed" signs and place face down in locations susceptible to flood damage.
- Check town catch basins and culverts and clear debris.
- Photograph catch basins (can use GPS units or smart phone with date/time stamp) to document pre-storm condition. Document condition of culverts. Documentation may be necessary after the storm to obtain federal or other aid.
- Document mileage of highway department trucks and other equipment at the start of the storm in order to be eligible for reimbursement for costs associated with their use during and in recovery after the storm.
- Alert or activate extra staff.
- Print MA DEP emergency regulations for the Wetlands Protection Act. A Severe Weather Declaration outlining emergency regulations for each forecast event will be published online prior to the emergency (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/climate-energy/climate/preparedness/storm-preparedness-and-emergency-response-resources.html>).
- Also print MA DEP regulations for emergency repairs in Wetlands (310 CMR), Waterways (Ch. 91) and for 401 Water Quality (314 CMR), <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/regulations/emergency-repairs-to-structures-road-and-facilities.html>.

Selectboard/Town Administrative Staff/EMD:

- Watch river gage information (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis/rt>). Know at what discharges roads begin to flood.
- Alert police and highway departments about potential flood emergency.
- **EMD** hold pre-event meeting with police, highway, selectboard, fire and emergency services personnel to share information and coordinate actions.
- **EMD** oversee Emergency Operations Center (EOC may be at Fire Department). The EOC should have emergency radio communication capability in order to maintain communication with police, fire, selectboard and highway department vehicles.
- **Selectboard Chair** may declare an emergency. Doing so early on positions the town to be reimbursed by FEMA (if storm results in

federally declared emergency) for additional costs for police, fire and other emergency services.

- **PIO** should coordinate the messaging to the public regarding protective actions and places to access official information such as on Mass 2-1-1.
- Stock up on bottled water at town hall and other important locations.
- In coordination with the **Board of Health** contact local restaurants that have volunteered to cook for emergency personnel during and immediately following a storm event. Costs to restaurants can be reimbursed by FEMA, and a contract need not be procured in advance.
- Reach out to local faith community or COAD to solicit help in aiding homebound residents.
- Contact USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel to alert them to possibility of flood damages. NRCS may activate extra staff to go to flood damage sites to evaluate them for restoration funding via the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. These include:

- District Conservationist Greenfield office, Rita Thibodeau, (rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov; 413-772-0384, ext.101)
- District Conservationist Pittsfield office, Rita Thibodeau, (rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov; 413-443-1776, ext.3)
- State Engineer, Deron Davis (deron.davis@ma.usda.gov; 413-253-4362)
- State Conservationist, Christine Clarke (Christine.clarke@ma.usda.gov; 413-253-4350)

EWP funds can be used to make repairs where infrastructure is damaged or threatened. These funds can be accessed where damage has occurred due to any severe event. It need not be a federally declared emergency. However, NRCS staff must evaluate damage sites before any repairs are made by the town. Call NRCS staff as soon as possible after the storm.

Fire Department:

- Contact TRIAD of Franklin County (<http://www.fcso-ma.us/triad-74.html>) for information about homebound and elderly people who may need to be evacuated. TRIAD officers may be able to assist in evacuations.
- Contact Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager (lkittross@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521 x 32) at Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for more information on the TRIAD programs in Berkshire County.

Police:

- Activate extra officers.
- Prepare and distribute to officers a form for people to sign who refuse to evacuate a flooded area.

During the Storm

Once an emergency is declared, management of the town's response rests with the EMD.

Highway Department:

- Maintain contact with Emergency Ops Center, EMD and selectboard.
- Find, remove downed trees.
- Report downed electrical wires.
- Check culverts and catch basins to keep open.
- Set up "Road Closed" signs where necessary.

Fire Department:

- May staff and operate the Emergency Operations Center.
- Respond to municipal needs as directed by the EMD.
- Evacuate people from flood-inundated areas and take them to shelters.

Police:

- Maintain contact with EMD, Emergency Ops Center and selectboard and update on current conditions.
- Conduct well-being checks on homebound and at-risk populations. Take those needing assistance to local shelters. Coordinate efforts for homebound populations with TRIAD.
- Set up "Road Closed" signs and direct traffic where necessary.
- Determine when and where flood evacuation is needed in consultation with EMD.
- Evacuate people from flood-inundated areas and take them to shelters as needed to assist Fire Department.

Selectboard/Town Staff:

- Designate someone to be at the Emergency Ops Center and maintain communication with police, highway, fire and emergency personnel as directed by the EMD.

EMD:

- Designate an emergency shelter, if necessary. Refer to local CEMP for direction about setting up an emergency shelter.

- During an event a town may activate an emergency shelter using an automated calling system such as Code Red or other reverse calling system. It does not have to be in compliance with MA codes.
 - Request Medical Reserve Corps and Disaster Animal Response Team volunteers to assist with staffing the shelter.
 - Collaborate with the Multi-Agency Coordinating Center (MACC; <http://westernmassready.org/preparedness-projects/multi-agency-coordination-center/>) should this be a large regional event.

Building Commissioner:

- Check status of buildings that are structurally questionable or subject to inundation.

Board of Health:

- Assist in shelter operations to ensure health and safety. Establish contact and share information with the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) regarding current status (Mark Maloni, HMCC Planning and Operations Coordinator; 413-774-3167, ext. 154; <http://frcog.org/program-services/emergency-preparedness/region-1-health-medical-coordinating-coalition/>).



photo credit: Benjamin Cox

Recovery

Building Commissioner:

- Contact MEMA to link to FEMA (if a federally declared emergency) and work with their inspectors to examine properties in flood zones for habitability. (Bob Barry, MEMA Local Coordinator, Robert.D.Barry@massmail.state.ma.us; 413-750-1404).

Board of Health:

- Inspect crops for contamination. Be sure crops contaminated by flood debris are plowed under or removed.
- For assistance in evaluating crops contact Nick Child, Chief Emergency Planning Officer at MA DEP via the Emergency Response Program number; 1-888-304-1133. They will help determine if oil or other hazardous materials are present.
- Contact Barbara Legatowicz, Animals in Disaster Coordinator, at MEMA for requirements for burying or disposing of animal carcasses; 508-820-2032.
- For assistance in evaluating possible contamination of public water supplies or private wells, call MA DEP through the Emergency Response Program; 1-888-304-1133.
- Centers for Disease Control Emergency Response Hotline (24-hour); 1-770 488-7100.
- Communicate with the PIO to provide messages regarding contamination and potential disease risks. Check status and plans of restaurants and other holders of food permits. Monitor for disease outbreaks.
- Coordinate resource needs and status with the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC. Mark Maloni, HMCC Planning and Operations Coordinator; 413-774-3167, ext. 154; <http://frcog.org/program-services/emergency-preparedness/region-1-health-medical-coordinating-coalition/>).

EMD:

- Activate Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). These volunteers can perform non-medical assistance via the Incident Command System (ICS). CERT can direct traffic, assist in shelters and provide other services.
- Coordinate with the COAD and the Western Mass. Medical Reserve Corps (www.wmmrc.org) regarding the need for volunteers and volunteer management.

- Set up a system for managing donations and volunteers via the Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers program (<http://wrhsac.org/projects-and-initiatives/spontaneous-unaffiliated-volunteers-training-series/>).

Selectboard/Town Staff:

- In coordination with **Highway Department** contact USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service personnel to alert them to flood damaged locations which may be eligible for restoration funding through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. These include:
 - District Conservationist, Greenfield office, Rita Thibodeau (rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov; 413-772-0384, ext.101)
 - District Conservationist Pittsfield office, Rita Thibodeau, (rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov; 413-443-1776, ext.3)
 - State Engineer, Deron Davis (deron.davis@ma.usda.gov; 413-253-4362)
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EWP funds can be used to make repairs where infrastructure is damaged or threatened. These can be accessed where damage has occurred due to any severe event. It need not be a federally declared emergency. However, NRCS staff must evaluate damage sites before any repairs are made by the town. Call NRCS staff as soon as possible after the storm.

- In coordination with the **Wastewater Treatment Department**, Contact U.S.EPA if untreated sewage may be discharged due to flooding. Contact Catherine Young, On-Scene Coordinator in Emergency Planning & Response (young.catherine@epa.gov; 617-918-1217). This office will activate EPA's emergency responders. Report a wastewater discharge to MA DEP via the Emergency Response Program; 1- 888-304-1133.

Fire Department:

- Report release of hazard materials such as oil or other pollutants to MA DEP; 1-888-304-1133. MA DEP can deploy an Emergency Response team that works within the ICS.

Highway Department:

- Do not make temporary repairs to roads or other areas affected by flooding until inspection by NRCS District Conservationist or NRCS Engineer.
- If repairs will be made affecting 100 feet or more of a navigable river, a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be needed (USACE Regulatory Permitting Office, Concord, MA, 978-318-8338).
- Contact MA DEP regarding regulations for making repairs affecting rivers or wetlands regulated under the Wetlands Protection Act. A Severe Weather Declaration outlining emergency regulations for each forecast event will be published online prior to the emergency (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/climate-energy/climate/preparedness/storm-preparedness-and-emergency-response-resources.html>). These are tailored and directed to counties or regions likely to be affected. MA DEP will notify the Conservation Commission via email of the emergency regulations. The Cons Com is responsible for notifying the Highway Department/DPW.
- The MA DEP Severe Weather Declaration does NOT suspend the requirements of any other statute or regulation, including Waterways (G.L. c. 91, 310 CMR 9.00), 401 Water Quality Certification (314 CMR 9.00), the Massachusetts Clean Waters Act (G.L. c. 21, §§26-53), or Inland/Coastal Restriction Orders (310 CMR 12.00 and 310 CMR 13.00) or federal law.
- For links to downloadable regulations for emergency repairs in Wetlands (310 CMR), Waterways (Ch. 91) and for 401 Water Quality (314 CMR), <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/regulations/emergency-repairs-to-structures-road-and-facilities.html>.
- If state roads are damaged, contact MEMA, 413-750-1404, to begin process of repair with MassDOT.

Acronyms

CEMP	Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
COAD	Community Organizations Active in Disasters
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EMD	Emergency Management Director
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EWP	Emergency Watershed Protection (an NRCS program)
FRCOG	Franklin Regional Council of Governments
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GPS	Global Positioning System
HMCC	Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition
ICS	Incident Command System
MACC	Multi-Agency Coordinating Center (established by WRHSAC)
MA DEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
MEMA	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service (Division of USDA)
PIO	Public Information Officer
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
WRHSAC	Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council



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