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Disaster Assistance

More than \$2.2 million in disaster assistance has been approved for Iowans impacted by Missouri River flooding. Read more on page 3.

Task Force Website to be Available Soon

A website for the Missouri River Recovery Coordination Task Force is under construction and is expected to be launched by mid November. Watch the HSEMD website, www.iowahomeland-security.org, for updates on the status of the Task Force website.

Governor Creates Task Force to Coordinate Missouri River Flood Recovery

Governor Branstad has created the Missouri River Recovery Coordination Task Force to oversee the state's recovery efforts.

The Governor announced the creation of this task force on Oct. 17 and appointed Derek Hill, HSEMD administrator, as the chairman.

"Recovery from disaster is not only about rebuilding roads and buildings, but is ultimately about rebuilding communities and the lives of those who were changed by a disaster,"

said Hill. "That is why the Governor has created this task force and why its members will work to ensure communities and people are able to rebuild their homes, businesses, public property and, most importantly, their lives."

Hill said the task force has two goals: to coordinate the immediate and sustained disaster response to help individuals, families and businesses return to normal activities; and to reduce the continued loss of economic opportunities.

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Repair, Relink and Recover – The Iowa DOT's Approach to the Missouri River flooding

For three of the last four years, Iowa has been dealt a heavy blow by flooding. The 2011 floods took a significant toll on several major roadways in western Iowa. Never before had the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) had to deal with a flood of the magnitude and duration of the 2011 Missouri River event, which resulted in the closure of 67 miles of interstate, 10 miles of other state highways and three major river crossings.



I-29 near Hamburg, taken during construction on Oct. 5, 2011. Photo: Iowa DOT

tem serving Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and South Dakota.

From the initial warning of flooding in May, the Iowa DOT began planning for the water that eventually affected an entire regional transportation sys-

Iowa's state highway system was first impacted by the flooding on June 1 with the closure of the Interstate 29

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Missouri River Recovery Task Force

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The task force will accomplish its goals through coordinating assistance, sharing information, monitoring progress, providing technical support, recommending recovery program funding needs, and reporting program recommendations or changes to the Governor.

The task force is comprised of members from local, state and federal governments, voluntary and non-profit agencies and private-sector business organizations.

The task force has been organized into 10 working groups to coordinate efforts in the areas of:

- Interagency levees
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Health and human services
- Education
- Economic development
- Housing
- Natural resources
- Communications
- Utilities

The task force has been meeting weekly to discuss progress and ensure recovery efforts are coordinated to avoid duplication and provide assistance in the most efficient way. ♦

Public Assistance Grant Program Instrumental in Rebuilding Communities

The Missouri River flooding this summer and fall caused massive amounts of damage to roads, bridges, buildings and other public infrastructure. Fortunately, a federal grant program is helping communities rebuild.

The federal Public Assistance Program is an important force in helping communities rebuild by reimbursing eligible disaster-related expenses of state agencies, local governments, and certain non-profit organizations.



The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD) administers Public Assistance Program funding, which may be used to repair or replace disaster-damaged facilities and cover costs of emergency protective measures.

It is estimated that projects funded by the Public Assistance Program will exceed \$73 million in Woodbury, Monona, Harrison, Pottawattamie, Mills and Fremont counties.

Anticipated projects include repair of roads, bridges and other public infrastructure, along with emergency protective measures that were taken to prevent or mitigate damage from flood waters.

“HSEMD is involved in Public Assistance projects from beginning to end,” said Pat Hall, who is serving as the state coordinating officer for this disaster.

HSEMD’s role includes notifying applicants of funding availability, assisting with applications, providing technical assistance on project development, reviewing projects and submitting to FEMA for award and obligation and monitoring progress of projects and compliance with state and federal regulations.

Currently, 391 Public Assistance projects have been approved by FEMA.

“HSEMD and FEMA strive to reimburse communities for as much of the eligible cost of rebuilding their disaster-damaged infrastructure as we possibly can,” said Hall.

The Missouri River flooding is one of 14 Presidential-declared disasters Iowa has received since 2007. HSEMD is involved in some facet of recovery work for all 14 disasters.

Find out more about the Public Assistance Program, by visiting www.iowahomelandsecurity.org and looking in the “Disasters” section. ♦

DOT's Approach to Missouri River Flooding

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ramps at Hamilton Boulevard in Sioux City. On June 4, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a flood inundation map showing areas likely to be flooded along the Missouri River. The forecast was bleak and showed an increased risk to several highways along the corridor in Iowa.

On June 10, the Iowa DOT's state-wide operations center entered into emergency mode, coordinating daily meetings to plan for and mitigate, where possible, the impact of the flooding on the highways.

Conference calls were regularly scheduled with the Federal Highway Administration, surrounding state transportation departments and other Iowa state agencies to maintain an open line of communication to coordinate emergency response activities.

From June through September, 34 situation reports were generated to assure consistent information was being shared between all involved parties.

While addressing the potential and actual impacts of flooding on the state highway system, the Iowa DOT was also in the midst of preparing its own facilities located in the path of the flood waters. The I-29 rest areas near Onawa were closed to use as a staging area for

materials and sandbags placed for its protection. Equipment, salt and sand was removed from the Council Bluffs-north and Pacific Junction garages; and electronic weight measurement devices and office equipment were removed from the weigh scales located near Salix and in Fremont County. Utilities were shut off; computers and communications equipment removed. Iowa DOT employees from around the state were involved in this effort.

Iowa DOT employees were also working long hours to keep the public informed of the situation and assist travelers and commercial

motor carriers navigate the closures. From June 8 to July 12, more than 110 news releases were issued. Employees from many offices at the agency's main complex in

Ames volunteered to staff a flood hotline, which received nearly 34,000 calls from travelers seeking alternative route information. The peak call volume was 3,800 calls in a 14-hour span when the I-680/I-29 interchange closed.

A Google-based road closure map was developed that provided regional travel information for Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri to help travelers navigate around flooded state highways. The map received 2.8 million unique views from people all around the country and in Canada.

Over \$2 Million in Individual Assistance Funding Approved

More than \$2 million in assistance has been approved for lowans impacted by Missouri River flooding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has approved \$2.2 million for residents of Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona and Pottawattamie counties as part of the Individual Assistance Program.

Individual Assistance may include grants to help pay for rent and home repairs, replace personal property and reimburse medical and other serious disaster-related expenses not covered by insurance.

Assistance may also include low-interest federal disaster loans to homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes and private, nonprofit organizations from the Small Business Administration.

Residents in the five eligible counties have until Dec. 19, 2011 to apply for assistance.

How to apply:

- Call toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing- and speech-impaired.
- Apply online at www.fema.gov, www.disasterassistance.gov
- Apply via smartphone at m.fema.gov.

FEMA registration lines are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week. ♦

"...creative problem solving and new ways of thinking were being utilized at every stage of the emergency response and recovery process..."

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DOT Approach to Missouri River Flooding

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The Iowa DOT's active role in daily U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conference calls was instrumental in helping the department reach media markets beyond the state lines to keep them informed about the impacts to the highway system in Iowa. They also kept the Iowa DOT informed about scheduled increases in the release rates from Gavins Point Dam and any levee breaches that had occurred. This information proved valuable in helping the Iowa DOT project flood inundation scenarios and direct resources to potential trouble areas.

Mitigating the impact of the flooding on the state's highway system was in some instances a feasible option. Several mitigation methods were employed, including TrapBag® installation along I-29 near Blencoe, north of Missouri Valley and on U.S. 30. The barrier wall formed kept these vital links available to travelers following the closures on other sections of the interstate. The elevation of a section of I-29 north of Missouri Valley was raised to prevent it from being overtopped by flood waters. The foreslopes and shoulders of Iowa 175 were reinforced to mitigate damage to the roadway and allow it to be reopened quicker. Concrete barrier wall, sandbags, plastic and pumps were used on I-680 near Loveland and on Iowa 175.

Iowa DOT employees were responsible for installing and filling the TrapBags on U.S. 30, a process that took four days working around the clock to complete. The effort left the Office of Support Services scrambling to find portable showers and cots that could



Iowa Hwy. 2. Photo: Iowa DOT.

be used by employees at the work site.

Once the flood water began to recede, and where the roadways were not destroyed, the first task was to remove the hazardous material, followed by debris removal and cleaning of the roadway. Once cleared of debris, the Iowa DOT began assessing the extent of the damage, which included visual inspections and testing of the integrity and load-carrying capacity of the pavement and bridges.

Coordinators Bob Younie, director of the Office of Maintenance, and Michael Kennerly, director of the Office of Design, lead teams of employees responsible for carrying out the agency's fast-track recovery effort. A variety of tasks were being performed simultaneously, from collecting damage assessment information to using ground-penetrating radar to look for voids under the pavement, overseeing consultant and contractor work,

designing repair plans, preparing contract documents and holding emergency bid lettings.

Under the leadership of Iowa DOT Director Paul Trombino III, staff were asked to "be bold and innovative" in their approach to the recovery effort with the goal of restoring traffic on all affected roadways before the end of the year. Working in conjunction with the contracting and consulting industries, the Iowa DOT remains on track to achieve this goal.

While creative problem solving and new ways of thinking were being utilized at every stage of the emergency response and recovery process, the Iowa DOT's commitment to quality and public safety remained foremost in the minds of employees.

Article submitted by the Iowa Department of Transportation. ♦

Recovery Assistance Available to Individuals and Businesses

Assistance for individuals and businesses impacted by Missouri River flooding is available from several sources.

FEMA Individual Assistance Program

Citizens in Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona and Pottawattamie counties may apply through FEMA. Assistance may include grants or a loan through the Small Business Administration.

- Call toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing- and speech-impaired
- Apply online at www.fema.gov, www.disasterassistance.gov, or via smartphone at m.fema.gov.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance

Iowans living and working in Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona and Pottawattamie counties may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits under the federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program. The benefits cover self-employed workers not usually entitled to unemployment insurance, including farmers. Any Iowa WORKS center can accept DUA

claims. Visit www.iowaworkforce.org for information.

Legal Assistance

A toll-free legal aid hotline is available for survivors of recent storms and flooding in Iowa. The service allows callers to request the assistance of a lawyer. The service is a partnership between FEMA, the Iowa Bar and its Young Lawyers Division and the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division.

Those seeking assistance may call 877-775-8882, 24 hours a day to request assistance. Survivors who qualify for assistance will be matched with Iowa lawyers who have volunteered to provide free help.

Iowa Individual Assistance Grant Program No Longer Available

Residents in Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona and Pottawattamie counties may no longer apply for the Iowa Individual Disaster Assistance Grant Program because the federal Individual Assistance Program supercedes the Iowa program. For more information, visit www.dhs.iowa.gov and select the Storm Help link. ♦

Assistance for Community Disaster Recovery

Currently, these forms of assistance are available to communities as they rebuild following the Missouri River flooding.

FEMA Public Assistance Program

Government entities and select non-profit agencies may be eligible for reimbursement under this program. Contact HSEMD for information.

Community Disaster Loan Program

Provides operational funding to help local governments that have incurred a significant loss in revenue due to a major disaster that has or will adversely affect their ability to provide essential municipal services. Apply through HSEMD. ♦

Assistance for Agriculture Losses is Available

Agriculture producers who sustained damage from the flooding of the Missouri River may be eligible for assistance.

USDA Secretarial Designation

The United States Department of Agriculture granted a disaster designation for 60 counties for disaster-related damage in 2011.

Assistance is available through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including emergency loans and the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program.

Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the Oct. 12, 2011, designation to apply for emergency loan assistance. SURE Program applications for 2011 crop losses will be accepted in 2012.

More information can be obtained through local FSA offices.

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture announced the availability of \$360,000 to help repair conservation practices damaged by storm events during the 2011 crop year.

Funding is available in 60 counties that were granted disaster designation by the USDA.

The deadline to apply for the repair funding is Dec. 30, 2011, and all repairs must be completed by June 30, 2012.

Contact a local Soil and Water Conservation Office for more information. ♦

Advice for Disaster Survivors from the Attorney General's Office

The Iowa Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division, has some tips and reminders for survivors of the Missouri River flooding as they clean up, repair and rebuild.

Cleanup, Contractors and Con Artists

Before you hire a contractor:

- Contact your insurance company to get a damage and repair or replacement estimate. Don't allow the contractor to negotiate with your insurer on your behalf.
 - Get more than one estimate from a contractor. Avoid on-the-spot contracts.
 - Check out contractors before signing a contract. Check with the Attorney General, Better Business Bureau, check references, and verify the contractor's registration with the Iowa Division of Labor. Avoid out of area businesses.
 - Get it all in writing: the price, all guarantees, all promises, the type and quality of materials, the starting and completion dates, permit responsibilities, and whether the contractor will place a lien, security interest or mortgage on your property.
 - Ask for proof of liability insurance and bonding.
 - Don't pay a large amount in advance. Pay materials suppliers directly whenever possible.
- Write down license plate numbers of salespeople, contractors and workers.
- You have the right to cancel and right to a refund within three business days of most door-to-door sales, or sales made at a place other than the seller's normal place

of business. The contractor must provide you a written notice of your right to cancel.

- Don't sign off and complete payment until you are satisfied with the work.

Price Gouging is Against the Law

It is illegal for sellers to charge excessive prices for merchandise needed by disaster victims.

Merchandise includes, but is not limited to, water, food, medicines, sanitation supplies, utilities, building materials, and materials, goods, or services for cleanup or repair.

An excessive price is presumed when the seller has substantially increased the price of the merchandise over the price at which the merchandise was sold or offered for sale in the usual course of business immediately prior to the onset of the emergency or from a substantial increase in the markup from cost if wholesale prices or costs have increased.

The regulation is in effect during the period of any declared disaster and for a subsequent recovery of up to six months from the date of the declaration.

For more information, visit www.IowaAttorneyGeneral.gov.

This information was provided by the office of Attorney General Tom Miller, Consumer Protection Division. ♦

Missouri River Recovery
Coordination Task Force

Chairman
Brig. Gen. Derek Hill,
Iowa Homeland Security
and Emergency
Management Administrator

The Missouri River Flood Recovery newsletter is published by the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division in cooperation with members of the Missouri River Recovery Coordination Task Force.

Questions or comments may be directed to:
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