

TOWN OF AMHERST FLOOD RESPONSE PLAN

This document is an annex to the Town of Amherst Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and is specifically used as a guideline for flooding events.

Flood Plans can enable a flexible response to problems caused by flooding. Although barriers may protect potential flood areas from predictable weather events, flooding can occur at any time. Typical events we see in our area include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Prolonged or excessive rainfall.
- Rapid snowmelt.
- Abnormally high creeks and stream levels due to rainfall upstream.
- Major storms across the region.

FLOOD THREAT RECOGNITION SYSTEM

The Town of Amherst has two main creeks in our community. Ellicott Creek runs through the center of town and Tonawanda Creek runs on the northern edge. Both of these creeks are monitored on a 24-hour basis by USGS Gauges. The Town of Amherst Department of Emergency Services personnel are on call 24/7 and have automatic notifications sent to their mobile devices when the water levels approach 2 feet below flood stage. Our office also has a weather radio on 24/7 and we are active participants in the National Weather Service (NWS) Chat System where we converse regularly with the forecasters in the Buffalo Office when the potential exists for flooding. All of these units are monitored 24/7.

When a gauge alert is received we will physically travel throughout the town to make visual checks of some of the key areas of high water levels to obtain the information needed to develop a community message to residents. The areas which are initially monitored are the dam in Williamsville behind Town Hall, the Castle Bridge at the dead end of Willow Brook Lane, and the rear yards in the south end of Lehn Springs. We contact Town of Lancaster Emergency Management to obtain information about the water levels there because that high water becomes our high water after about 12 hours. We monitor the secondary drainage ditches in the northern end of Amherst to see if the water rise in the Tonawanda Creek basin is holding back water flow in these ditches. We also travel to Goodrich Road in the Town of Clarence, just east of Amherst, to see if the water is traveling across the fields and roadside ditches or if it is holding within the banks of the main creek. The completion of an Erie County road project causes surface water to drain from Wehrle Drive into Ellicott Creek. Because this increases the creek's water flow, a static water level gauge has been installed at the new headwall at Wehrle Drive and Lehn Springs which allows us to further monitor the levels and compare them to the electronic USGS gauge on Ellicott Creek at Sheridan Drive.

The Dept. of Emergency Services then takes the data and communicates with the Town Flood Plain Administrator and reviews the FEMA flood maps to determine the extent of potential issues associated with the expected water levels.

FLOOD WATCHES AND WARNINGS

A typical flood watch or warning can be issued several hours or days in advance by the National Weather Service. Sample flood warning messages which may be issued by the NWS and the Town of Amherst include, but are not limited to:

- Flood Alert – Flooding is possible.
- Flood Warning – Flooding of homes, businesses and main roads is expected.
- Severe Flood Warning – Severe flooding may cause imminent danger.
- **Minor Flooding** – minimal or no property damage, but may cause back yard flooding or inconvenience situations due to water on roadways.
- **Moderate Flooding** – some inundation of roadways and low lying areas near streams. Some evacuations of people and/or transfer of property to higher elevations may be necessary.
- **Major Flooding** – extensive inundation of structures and roads. Evacuation of people and/or transfer of property to higher elevations.

Flash Flood or Flood Watch: Indicates flash flooding or flooding is possible within the designated watch area. When a watch is issued, be alert and ready to take action.

Flash Flood or Flood Warning: Flash flooding or flooding has been reported or is imminent. You should take necessary precautions and actions at once.

Flood warnings are disseminated via the news media, on the local radio stations, social media, via our homepage, www.amherst.ny.us, as an ALERT message, via NITTEC as a commuter warning and, as necessary, a door-to-door notification by town firefighters and police officers. Residents are also educated about the NYALERT program where they can also make their own determinations as to where and what types of warnings they wish to receive.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Town Supervisor and Town Board shall execute the powers as identified with NYS General Municipal Law, Article 2B. The Town Attorney and his/her office shall act as counsel to the board as they do on a daily basis. All other department heads shall make themselves and their staff available to assist with any assigned duties or tasks.

POLICE

Primary police responsibilities:

- Participate within the Unified Command structure
- Coordinate with emergency services and act as the community liaison to the media, etc.
- Assist with notifications and evacuations.
- Identify and establish detour routes due to high water and maintain proper traffic flow patterns as deemed appropriate.
- Provide community security to prevent against looting and other unruly activities.

FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Primary fire service responsibilities:

- Participate within the Unified Command structure
- Rescue trapped or stranded individuals.
- Control fires, released chemicals and other hazards.
- Assess hazards regarding flooding and evacuations.
- Ensure safety of rescue personnel.

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Primary responsibilities:

- Participate within the Unified Command Structure.
- Coordinate shelter operations.
- Coordinate Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations.
- Monitor flood stage heights and communicate with National Weather Service.
- Prepare Emergency Plans for local resources and useful equipment.
- Advise residents of proactive and protective measures.
- Issuing warning messages to residents and department heads.
- Advise on weather, water flow, warnings and evacuation.
- Issue situation updates.

HIGHWAY AND ENGINEERING DEPARTMENTS

- Participate in the Unified Command Structure.
- Deploy sandbags for flood defense.
- Free obstructions to storm and waste water drainage.
- Repair breaches in flood defenses.
- Visually monitor creeks and streams.
- Coordinate activities of utility companies.

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

- Assist with damage assessment process.
- Determine if structures are habitable.
- Assist with utility restorations.

ADVICE FOR THE PUBLIC DURING A FLOOD EVENT

1. FLOOD WARNING: 'GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN'.
2. Stay calm.
3. Ensure that neighbors know of the warning, and be prepared to help them.
4. Keep a list of useful telephone numbers.
5. Monitor NOAA weather or local radio.
6. Prepare a flood kit to include medications, warm clothing, sealed food, blankets, matches, candles, flashlights, portable radio, spare batteries, rubber gloves, personal documents.
7. Do not walk or swim through floods.
8. Be aware of hidden dips in a road.
9. Floods often contain sewage - avoid food that may have been contaminated by floodwater.
10. Avoid wet electrical equipment.
11. Ventilate your property as much as possible while maintaining security.
12. Do not drive down flooded streets.

IF FLOODING IS IMMINENT

- Consider evacuation, especially if it is recommended by emergency officials.
- Turn off electricity and gas.
- Move family members, pets and supplies to higher areas.

PERSONAL FLOOD PLANS

- Discuss a plan with family members, friends and neighbors.
- Know how to disconnect gas, electricity and water supplies.
- Know where to move vehicles in an emergency.
- Store valuable property in a raised secure location.
- Fill containers with clean water (Avoid using flood waters or local water).
- Care for the needs of pets and domestic animals

FLOOD PRE-EMERGENCY PLANNING

- Learn what terminology means, (Flood watch, Flood warning, Imminent Flooding, etc.).
- Develop a family plan for evacuations – where do we go, what do we take, etc.
- Create contact list of emergency numbers.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION LIST

Town Supervisor to notify:

- » All Town Board members

Director of Emergency Services to notify the following:

- » Chief of Staff
- » Highway Dispatch ⇒ ... to notify Superintendent of Highways
- » Fire Control ⇒ ... to notify Supervising Fire Dispatcher
- » Police Dispatch ⇒ ... to notify Chief of Police
- » Erie County Emergency Services – MERS Control
- » Commissioner of Building ⇒ ... to notify Building Maintenance
- » Town Clerk
- » Director of Human Resources
- » Town Comptroller / Director of Finance
- » Director of Information Technology
- » Director of Senior Services
- » Executive of Director of Youth and Recreation
- » Town Assessor
- » Town Attorney ⇒ ... to notify Court Administrator
- » Town Engineer ⇒ ... to notify Plant #16
- » Planning Director