



COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON

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NEWS RELEASE

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR WARNS OF DANGERS OF FLASH FLOODING

Nazareth (March 14, 2010) – In 2006, 58 Pennsylvania counties experienced flash flooding from tropical storms Frances, Ivan and Jeanne. “Pennsylvania is one of the most flood-prone states in the country,” said Northampton County Emergency Management Director Robert Mateff. “In fact, floods claim more lives than any other weather event, not just in Pennsylvania, but across the nation.”

Flash floods can occur in mountain valleys, in normally dry stream beds and where communities have been built close to streams. Sometimes flash floods strike even where it is not raining. A wall of water can rush down a valley following a severe storm that dumped a large amount of rain many miles upstream.

“Flash floods are very dangerous,” said Mateff. “They give very little warning and can be very powerful.”

There are two different stages to alert the public to possible flash flooding, and the National Weather Service monitors conditions to issue the appropriate cautions. **A flash flood watch** means that flooding may occur. Stay alert. Watch for thunderstorms. Keep an eye on rivers and streams. If they rise,

don't wait. Get to higher ground fast! **A flash flood warning** means there is actual flooding. Act at once! Go to a safe area on higher ground.

Children should not play in ditches or other waterways if flash flooding might occur. The water can become deep very quickly and the current can become very strong. Campers should be careful selecting campsites and parking recreational vehicles. Drivers should watch for flooding at bridges and dips in the road. It only takes a few inches of water to move a vehicle and rapidly rising water can carry the car away, or the road may already be washed out but that might not be immediately visible to a motorist. Anytime a vehicle becomes trapped in water, occupants should get out immediately and move to high ground.

Finally, the director says there may not be time for a watch or warning message to be given over the radio or television. Citizens should monitor weather reports during severe weather in order to anticipate the possibility of flash flooding, and then be ready to act independently if it happens.

March 14-20 is Weather Emergency Preparedness Week in Pennsylvania and officials are urging residents to identify the types of severe weather that could happen where they live and to develop a family emergency response plan before a disaster occurs. This plan describes what to do and where to go if severe weather occurs. It should be in writing and should be discussed and reviewed with all family members on a regular basis.

The Commonwealth recently unveiled a new Web site designed to help citizens prepare for emergencies before they happen. Emergency kit checklists and family plan templates can be downloaded free of charge at www.ReadyPA.org.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This important information was provided by Northampton County Emergency Management Services as part of Pennsylvania's Weather Emergency Preparedness Week.