



STATE OF OHIO

Emergency Operations Center

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Joint Information Center **NEWS RELEASE** *2005 Severe Winter Weather Update #8*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information:

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OHIOANS BRACE FOR LAST ROUND OF HEAVY RAINS AND SOME FLOODING **59 Counties under Governor's State of Emergency Declaration**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – With heavy rains and strong winds pummeling Ohio today and below-freezing temperatures expected tonight, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency is encouraging citizens to remain updated through local media outlets to changes in weather conditions that may affect road travel and flood conditions.

“State agencies are working long hours to provide resources to local governments responding to the severe weather,” said Nancy Dragani, Executive Director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. “It’s been a challenging start to 2005, but I am hopeful that once this last system crosses Ohio, we can begin to assess the damage and identify potential assistance.”

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is monitoring the state’s situation and preparing for preliminary damage assessment slated to being next week in many of the affected counties.

Governor Bob Taft added Columbiana, Hancock and Stark counties yesterday to a list of 59 counties now under a state of emergency declaration. The inclusive list is: Allen, Ashland, Athens, Auglaize, Belmont, Brown, Butler, Champaign, Clark, Clermont, Clinton, Columbiana, Coshocton, Crawford, Darke, Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Greene, Guernsey, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Huron, Jefferson, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, Marion, Mercer, Meigs, Miami, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Morrow, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Preble, Richland, Ross, Seneca, Shelby, Stark, Tuscarawas, Union, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Wyandot counties.

STATE AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Because of the current storm front, the **Ohio Department of Transportation** reports an increase in flood-related road closures with 103 US and State Routes currently closed. Portions of US Route 33 in Mercer and Van Wert counties, along with the ramps at I-270 and US 23 in southern Franklin County are closed. Counties with five or more road closures at this time include: Ashland (5), Athens (6), Coshocton (6), Guernsey (5), Putnam (7), Stark (5), and Tuscarawas (6).

ODOT is also preparing road crews for response to any potential ice or snow buildups that may result from Thursday’s storms.

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to monitor conditions at its flood control reservoirs and dams around Ohio that include Delaware, Alum Creek, Deer Creek, Paint Creek and Dillon lakes, and the Bolivar Dam in Tuscarawas County. The Corps says all of its reservoirs are operating efficiently and as they are designed to do during periods of heavy precipitation. Controlled water releases may be needed over the next few days and will be coordinated with local emergency management and other public officials. One of five barges trapped against the dam at Belleville Locks and Dam has been removed and efforts continue to remove the remaining four barges that sank to the river bottom. The Corps of Engineers continues to monitor a possible loss in the navigation pool between the Belleville Locks and Dam to the Willow Island Locks and Dam. A loss in the pool could affect industrial intake and some areas along the river may suffer bank failure and slips.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources has two search and rescue boats in Tuscarawas County assisting the Zoar Fire Department in evacuation/rescue missions.

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency continues to monitor waste water treatment plants and public water supplies. EPA is also assisting with water sampling issues in Coshocton, Crawford, Franklin, Hocking, Marion and Union counties.

PUCO reports that all power has been restored to Ohio residents who were affected by outages resulting from December and January storms. SBC reported that 5,000 customers are without phone service in the Dayton and Columbus areas. Crews from Michigan are assisting SBC.

Ohio Department of Health has received requests for information on water sampling from Coshocton, Crawford, Franklin, Hocking, Marion, Morgan and Union counties.

Ohio EMA confirms that eight storm-related deaths have occurred statewide: 3 in Auglaize County; 1 in Darke County; 1 in Defiance County; 1 in Highland County; 1 in Henry County; and 1 in Trumbull County. The State Emergency Operations Center continues daily operations with an average of 14 state agencies and volunteer organizations coordinating missions and monitoring weather and flooding throughout the state. Joint preliminary damage assessment teams consisting of federal, state and local EMA representatives anticipate surveying damaged flood areas early next week.

The **American Red Cross** continues its damage assessment of affected areas statewide. Shelters and service centers are on standby to reopen, if necessary.

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