



STATE OF OHIO

Emergency Operations Center

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Joint Information Center **NEWS RELEASE** **2005 Severe Winter Weather Update #7**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information:

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OHIOANS ARE URGED TO REMEMBER SAFETY BASICS AS RAIN CONTINUES **Governor Adds Three Counties to State of Emergency Declaration**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – As the Ohio death toll increased to five because of the recent storms and flooding, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency is encouraging citizens to review flood and winter storm safety rules.

“As we see the end of the storm front approaching, it is very important to be mindful of safety tips to help ensure we weather these storms safely,” said Nancy Dragani, Executive Director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. “For safety’s sake, everyone needs to know the difference between storm watches and warnings, and know what to do during times of disaster.”

Yesterday, President Bush approved a federal declaration for 17 Ohio counties for the December 22-24, 2004 snow and ice storms. The declaration makes federal funding specifically for snow removal operations available to the state and eligible local governments in Butler, Champaign, Clark, Darke, Delaware, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Hardin, Logan, Madison, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Shelby, Union and Warren counties.

Governor Bob Taft declared a state of emergency earlier for the following 56 counties: Allen, Ashland, Athens, Auglaize, Belmont, Brown, Butler, Champaign, Clark, Clermont, Clinton, Coshocton, Crawford, Darke, Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Greene, Guernsey, Hamilton, 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, Tuscarawas, Union, Warren, Washington, Wayne and Wyandot. **Columbiana, Hancock and Stark** counties were added to the Governor’s declaration this evening. At close of business today, there were 59 on the Governor’s declaration.

STATE AGENCY ACTIVITIES

The Ohio Department of Transportation reports an increase in flood-related road closures with 99 US and State Routes currently closed. Counties with five or more road closures at this time include: Athens (10), Coshocton (5), Guernsey (10), Morgan (5), Muskingum (5), Tuscarawas (5) and Washington (9). ODOT also reported that a 75-foot embankment fell away from a guardrail along Interstate 76 in Portage County.

ODOT is also assisting with sandbagging and debris removal missions in Auglaize, Guernsey, Huron, Jefferson, Mercer, Richland and Washington counties.

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To date, the **Ohio Department of Natural Resources** has rescued 51 people in 11 missions. ODNR's Search and Rescue division rescued 10 people from high floodwaters in Morgan County today. The U.S. Coast Guard has offered ODNR the use of three rescue boats, if needed.

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency continues to monitor waste water treatment plants and public water supplies. EPA is assisting in debris removal and is providing technical assistance upon request.

PUCO reports that approximately 1,500 customers remain without power. At the height of the severe weather approximately 237,000 customers were without power. PUCO will continue to monitor utility activities; strong winds are forecasted for tonight.

Ohio Department of Health delivered 100 doses of tetanus vaccine to Washington County yesterday. ODH continues to assist Ohio EPA with water sampling. Earlier today, Washington County offices of Women, Infants and Children (WIC), health and family planning offices had to relocate to a different building due to flooding. They anticipate being in temporary offices for at least one month.

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections transported a tub grinder to assist in Mercer County today.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to try and remove the five barges trapped against the dam at Belleville Locks and Dam. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is monitoring 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. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tuscarawas County EMA, Ohio EMA and ODNR are also monitoring the Bolivar Dam in Tuscarawas County.

Ohio EMA continues to coordinate activities from the State EOC and will support county emergency management agencies as needed. 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** started its damage assessment of affected areas statewide. The Red Cross reported that Washington County closed its service center today, but may reopen its shelter tonight, if the flooding situation worsens. Shelters and service centers are on standby to reopen, if necessary.

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters announced that a warehouse was opened today in Byesville, Guernsey County, for distribution and drop off of cleaning supplies and other provisions. VOAD reported that it has 200 cleanup kits available for use and is expecting additional cleanup kits from Illinois.

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