



MEDIA UPDATE

Thursday, May 3, 2018

MEDIA CONTACT: Ken Parks, Missoula County Disaster and Emergency Services deputy coordinator, 406-258-4469, kparks@missoulacounty.us.

- The recent flooding in the area started about four weeks earlier than in 2011, the year of the last major flood event in Missoula County. With record snowpack above 6,000 feet expected to release around 60 inches of water as temperatures climb, officials predict this spring's flooding to peak later this month and continue into June. Residents who may be affected by flooding are encouraged to monitor [river flow forecasts](#) on the National Weather Service website.
- Current indicators of **Clark Fork River** above Missoula show flows dipping just below action stage (9.5 feet) over the weekend, followed by a spike in flows next week, likely exceeding the levels experienced this week.
- Current indicators of the **Bitterroot River** near Missoula show flows below flood stage, followed by a spike next week during which flows will likely reach flood stage (11 feet).
- With river levels predicted to rise again next week, residents who may be affected by flooding are encouraged to prepare their properties over the weekend. Residents can access the [Missoula Ready!](#) website for more information on hazard preparation.
- Localized flooding west of **Missoula**, mainly in the Orchard Homes neighborhood along Tower Street and Kehrwald Drive, has started to recede but is predicted to return next week. Approximately 20 homes in the area have been impacted. The Tower Street trailhead also remains closed until further notice.
- In **Seeley Lake**, localized flooding has been reported along Airport Road near Deer Park Drive; on C Street and Cabin Lane off the southern end of Boy Scout Road; along the bridge on the north end of Boy Scout Road, over the Clearwater River; and along Highway 83 south of town, just south of the Double Arrow.
- The County also has received reports of rising waters in the Valley of the Moon in the **Rock Creek/Clinton** areas, as well as in the **Potomac** area near Paws Up.

- County Commissioners signed an emergency proclamation regarding flooding at their administrative meeting this morning. Among other measures, the proclamation activates the [Emergency Operations Plan](#), with the Sheriff's Office serving as the lead agency that coordinates efforts to protect public safety.
- Officials in the Environmental Health Division of the Missoula City-County Health Department are urging affected residents with septic tanks NOT to pump them. Under certain flood conditions, pumping a tank could cause it to float up and damage inlet and outlet pipes. Pumping flood or groundwater into floor sinks or house drains can overwhelm septic systems, leading to sewage surfacing on the ground or backing up in a house. The best solution is to plug all drains in the basement and drastically reduce water use in the house. More information on addressing septic tank issue during a flood is available on the [EPA's website](#).
- Missoula County will continue to update the Flood Resource Fact Sheet as needed and include it with this media update. **New information is highlighted in yellow.**

FLOOD RESOURCE FACT SHEET

MISSOULA CITY AND COUNTY RESIDENTS

General information

Preparing for and responding to flooding. The flood event currently impacting areas of Missoula County is the beginning of what we expect to be a prolonged event into early summer. The Missoula County Office of Emergency Management, Missoula County Sheriff's Office, City of Missoula Police Department, City of Missoula Public Works Department, Missoula County Public Works Department and numerous fire departments are the primary agencies involved in preparing for and responding to high-water events in Missoula County and are meeting regularly to assess the situation.

Monitoring water levels. Missoula County sheriff's deputies, Missoula City police officers, and city and county Public Works officials continue to monitor water levels and report critical information to the Office of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service. The NWS Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service provided regularly updated river forecasts [on its website](#).

Assessing levees. Officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will arrive in Missoula County on **Tuesday, May 8,** to tour and assess levees, ensure their integrity and provide insight and technical assistance to Missoula County.

Reporting flood activity. Residents concerned about rising water or who have noticed water covering or crossing a road should call 9-1-1 immediately so a responder can be dispatched to the area to assess the situation.

Assistance for residents

Coordination with area agencies. Missoula County OEM is working with local Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) to coordinate assistance for residents affected by flooding. These partners include the Red Cross, local volunteer organizations, DNRC, Forest Service and others. Information will be provided as it becomes available.

Emergency shelter. The American Red Cross of Idaho and Montana evacuation shelter at Christ the King Church, located at 1400 Gerald Ave. in **Missoula**, is **currently open**. The facility will be open to the public as needed. Residents seeking shelter should call 1-800-272-6668.

Safe drinking water. Water from wells affected by flooding may not be safe to drink. Floodwaters can contaminate wells, so residents should use bottled water until they are able to verify that the water is safe to drink. The Missoula City-County Health Department offers bacteriological testing of water samples Monday through Thursday for \$15. Residents seeking water testing should call 406-258-4755. As floodwaters are potentially contaminated by sewage, bacteria and viruses that can make people sick, residents who have had contact with floodwaters should wash their hands with soap and water, especially before eating or drinking. The Health Department also recommends residents ensure their tetanus shots are up to date. The department's walk-in clinic offers vaccinations on a sliding fee scale. Clinic hours and additional information are [available online](#).

Septic systems and sewers. Floodwaters can cause wastewater to surface or to back up into houses on septic systems. If there is any sign of floodwaters backing up into a house, residents should clean and disinfect the area before using it. Residents also should not pump flood or groundwater into floor sinks or house drains, as that amount of water can overwhelm septic systems, leading to sewage surfacing on the ground or backing up in a house. (The same is true for residents connected to the municipal sewer; pumping large quantities flood or groundwater into the city sewer can overload the wastewater treatment plant.) **The best solution is to plug all drains in the basement and drastically reduce water use in the house. More information on addressing septic tank issue during a flood is available on the [EPA's website](#).**

Sandbags

Providing sandbags to the public. Missoula County has a cache of sandbags stored at Public Works to help protect critical public infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. Protecting critical public infrastructure is crucial in mitigating further adverse impacts to citizens and property.

However, *a limited number of free, unfilled sandbags* are currently available in **Missoula** at the Public Works office, located at 6089 Training Drive.

In **Seeley Lake**, unfilled sandbags are located at the Missoula County Satellite Office, located at 3360 Highway 83. Missoula County Public Works on May 2 delivered another shipment of unfilled sandbags to Seeley Lake Fire Station No. 1, located at 200 Fire House Drive, just off A Street. [John Richards Construction](#) and [Deer Creek Excavating](#) have donated sand for public use. The John Richards pile is located on the south side of the parking lot of the and sand is available at the 1-Stop Convenience Store,

3072 Highway 83. The Deer Creek Excavating pile is across the street from the Rent-All Tools and Equipment at 165 Redwood Lane, just east of Highway 83. Both companies can help deliver sand, if needed.

(While during 2011's flood event, the County did provide limited sandbag filler from a surplus cache of road bed material, the material was not as effective as sand, and the County does not have surplus material to offer at this time.)

Businesses selling sand and sandbags. For residents wishing to acquire sandbags for personal property protection, there are several area businesses that sell sand and/or sandbags:

Far West Rock	728-8500
Home Depot	523-0901
Knife River	543-0088
Lowe's	329-1800
MT Flasher and Barricade	542-2701
Murdoch's	549-2355
Mutual Materials	549-2011
Time Rental	543-7136
Western Excavating	728-1400

***Note:** This may not be a complete list of businesses selling sand or sandbags, and Missoula County does not endorse one vendor over another.

Protecting private property with sandbags. The most effective way to protect homes and other structures is to construct a circular (not square) perimeter around the foundation. If you choose to use sandbags to protect private property, be aware that you need to obtain permission to place sandbags along riparian areas by calling the Missoula Conservation District at 406-829-3395 and the Army Corps of Engineers at 406-441-1375.

If you place sandbags on your property, make sure they are placed to protect your structures but not on top of stream banks or rivers, as this could push those waters to flow faster and deeper downstream — to the detriment of others.

Using safe sandbagging techniques. Sandbagging is labor-intensive and hard physical work. Be aware of your physical limitations when sandbagging and use sound body mechanics to avoid injury. Helpful guidelines on placement methods and filling techniques from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are available [online](#).

Flood safety tips

Remain alert. Stay tuned to your phone alerts, TV, radio or online sources for weather updates, emergency instructions or evacuation orders. [Missoula County residents are highly encouraged to sign up for free Smart 911 alerts.](#)

Limit travel. If there is standing water on a roadway, people should not walk or drive through the water, as it is difficult to judge its depth or movement below the surface. Just 6 inches of fast-moving

water can knock a person down, and one foot can carry a vehicle away. **WATCH VIDEO:** [Turn around, don't drown.](#)

Avoid standing water. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines. To report downed power lines, call NorthWestern Energy at 888-467-2669.

More flood safety tips are available on the [Disaster and Emergency Services](#) website.

Additional resources

Missoula Disaster and Emergency Services Information Line
406-258-4636 (258-INFO) for a recorded message updated regularly

[Missoula County Office of Emergency Management](#)

406-258-4469
[@MslaCountyOEM](#)
[facebook.com/Missoula.County.911](https://www.facebook.com/Missoula.County.911)

[Missoula County Public Works](#)

406-258-3701
[@MslaCoPubWorks](#)

[Missoula City-County Health Department](#)

406-258-4770
[@MslaHealthDept](#)

[Missoula County Floodplain Administration Program](#)

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