



NEWS RELEASE

Department of Public Safety

118 W. Capitol Ave. • Pierre, SD 57501 • (605) 773-3178 • fax: (605) 773-3018 • www.state.sd.us/dps

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CONTACT: Terry Woster, Public Information Office, 605.773.3231

Flood-Impacted Communities to Learn to Live With Levees

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Emergency Operations officials say record flooding on the Missouri River will require citizens to learn to live with levees, perhaps for two months or more.

To help protect riverside communities from the flooding, nearly 14 miles of levees have been built. About 7.5 miles are in the Pierre-Fort Pierre area and about 6.5 miles are in southern Union County in the Dakota Dunes area.

Many residents in those communities are unfamiliar with levees, and officials in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) say some basic information will help people understand what the levees do and what to watch for in the way of maintenance, security and public safety.

“The levees are our first line of defense against this record river flooding,” said Trevor Jones, Secretary of the State Department of Public Safety. “To keep the people and property safe, we need to make sure the levees are maintained in strong working condition. Citizens in the river communities need to know what to worry about and what to report to officials.”

Here are some levee basics for residents who have never before needed the information.

Personal Safety/ Public Safety

- The levees are in place to protect people and property. People should not climb or drive on the levees. They are not designed for these kinds of activity. For their own safety, citizens should stay away.
- But keeping people and vehicles off the levees is more than a personal safety issue. The integrity of the structure could be compromised, particularly if the plastic covering is pierced or torn. That could diminish the ability of the levees to protect against flooding.
- Law enforcement and National Guard soldiers will patrol the levees. They will be clearly identifiable by their uniforms. Unauthorized individuals caught on the levees could face criminal charges and face prosecution.

Maintenance

- Contractors working in coordination with state and local officials will perform maintenance throughout this flooding event. Authorized personnel can be identified by their vests or uniforms. Anyone authorized to be on the levees should be carrying credentials or identifying documents.
- Levee maintenance includes repairing plastic coverings, reducing and repairing erosion, and pumping water pooled near levees. That means citizens passing near the levees could see pumps and hoses and similar activity. That doesn't mean an emergency is happening. More than likely, it is routine activity designed to assure that the levees remain strong and stable.

Random Water and Sand Boils

- With temporary levees, it is common for some water to pool on the inside of the levee. However, if water is seen bubbling from the underside of the levee or water is flowing from the levee structure, that could be a sign of a potential breach.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers say it's also important to know that clean, clear water isn't a threat. Murky, dirty water could be an indication that material from the levee is being eaten away. If you see moving water, bubbling water or dirty water behind the levees, make a call.
- Sand boils are bubbling water pools found on the dry side of levees during floods. If undetected, sand boils can suck sand and other materials away from levees causing the structure to weaken and making it more susceptible to breaching.

Wildlife

- Burrowing animals that make dens in levees can cause the levee to weaken.
- Additionally, deer are known to poke holes in protective plastic sheeting, also diminishing the integrity of the structure.
- Levee security and maintenance personnel will be alert to wildlife around the levees, but citizens should be quick to report such activity, too.

What to report

- Unauthorized vehicles or people on the levees, or people who appear out of place or not engaged in patrols or maintenance.
- Moving or bubbling water and suspected sand boils.
- Animal activity along the levees.
- Any other activity that appears out of the ordinary. "See something; say something" applies as much to levee protection as to Homeland Security.
- To report issues or concerns about the levee systems, contact local authorities.

Levee Safety Fact Sheet: http://www.disasterrecovery.sd.gov/flood_info_pubs.aspx.