



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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FEMA, state officials began Kenosha County flood damage review

KENOSHA – The flood damage assessment process is underway in Kenosha County.

Representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Small Business Administration, Wisconsin Emergency Management and Kenosha County government today began the process of visiting private properties and public infrastructure that sustained damage from the July 10-12 floods.

Separate teams were deployed for the individual assistance (private property) and public assistance (government property/infrastructure) visits. The teams – which have counterparts in Racine and Walworth counties – are expected to continue working through the week.

The public assistance team is assessing damage to roads, parks and other government property, which was described in great detail in binders that municipal and county government officials compiled and submitted to Wisconsin Emergency Management last week. The individual assistance team is visiting homes that were cataloged as having major damage or having been destroyed under FEMA guidelines.

“We’re looking at the extent of damages to homes,” said Cassie Ringsdorf, external affairs officer for Chicago-based FEMA Region V. “We’re looking at the number of people who had insurance and who didn’t have insurance, who may not have coverage for the damage sustained. We’re also looking at the number of people that were displaced and how long they were displaced.”

In addition, Ringsdorf said the assessment team taking into consideration the amount of voluntary agency assistance that’s available in the area, as it determines whether the community can recover on its own, or if federal disaster assistance is needed.

After the assessment is completed, the information will be sent to Gov. Scott Walker, who will determine whether to request a Presidential disaster declaration.

“If there is a presidential disaster declaration for individual assistance, that aid can come in the form of grant funding to repair a home that’s been damaged by the flooding,” Ringsdorf said. “It can also assist with people to relocate while their home is being repaired. And it can also help provide funding to replace some of that personal property that was lost in their homes.”

If the Small Business Administration makes a disaster declaration of its own, low-interest loans may also be available to help businesses and homeowners with flood recovery costs.

Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser said he is pleased to have the federal and state representatives on the ground, assessing the damage here. Kreuser declared a state of emergency in the county immediately after nearly 8 inches of rain fell in New Munster on the morning of July 12, swelling the Fox River to record heights.

“We’re happy to have our FEMA, SBA and Wisconsin Emergency Management partners here to help us as we continue to recover from what was a catastrophe for hundreds if not thousands of residents,” Kreuser said. “Any assistance we can get from Washington or Madison will be much appreciated.”

Ringsdorf said there is not a set timeframe for when a Presidential disaster declaration decision could be made. Homeowners are urged to try to continue their personal recovery process before a federal decision is made, documenting damage with photos and keeping receipts for repair expenses.

“We’re going as quickly as we can to see all of the damages here in Kenosha County, along with the other teams in the two additional counties that are being assessed,” Ringsdorf said. “As soon that information is collected, it goes to the governor’s office and that request is made, and a decision is made as quickly as possible.”

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