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FEATURED

Recent Morgantown flooding intensified by climate change, land development

Lindsay Hapak, correspondent

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WVU Police assist stranded motorists on Patteson Drive's flooded streetway during a storm on July 29, 2021.

Photo courtesy WVU

Two severe thunderstorms hit Morgantown in the month of July, ravaging homes and flooding several areas of the city.

Officials estimate that water levels reached four and a half feet deep on Patteson Drive during the second severe weather event on July 29.

According to Damien Davis, director of Morgantown's Engineering and Public Works departments, this level of flooding was unusual for the area.

“Even though it’s happened twice in six weeks, the last time Patteson flooded, I believe, was prior to 2008,” he said.

The city’s Public Works Department is currently cleaning up debris caused by the storms.



Patteson Drive flooding swamps cars, strands motorists

Davis pointed to climate change and land development as contributing factors to the recent flooding in Morgantown.

“Morgantown has grown significantly in the last 20 years,” he said. “More development means more impervious surfaces, which means more runoff.”

Flooding is made more likely by more severe weather patterns caused by long-term global climate change, according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

Change in land cover, removal of vegetation and intense precipitation are all contributing factors to increased flooding.

The Engineering Department, also in charge of managing the city’s floodplain areas, is collecting information related to damages from the storms.

Residents can upload photos of personal property damage to an online survey.

The city will then share information with the County's MECCEA 911 Office to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on providing assistance.

Monongalia county residents can also complete a damage assessment survey online by Aug. 11.

Davis said the ferocity and continuation of the storms contributed to flooding as well.

"The intensity and duration of the past two storms also play a part in why we were flooded," Davis said. "The system has the capacity to handle the volume of water over a longer duration, but these two storms were so quick that it overwhelmed the storm system."

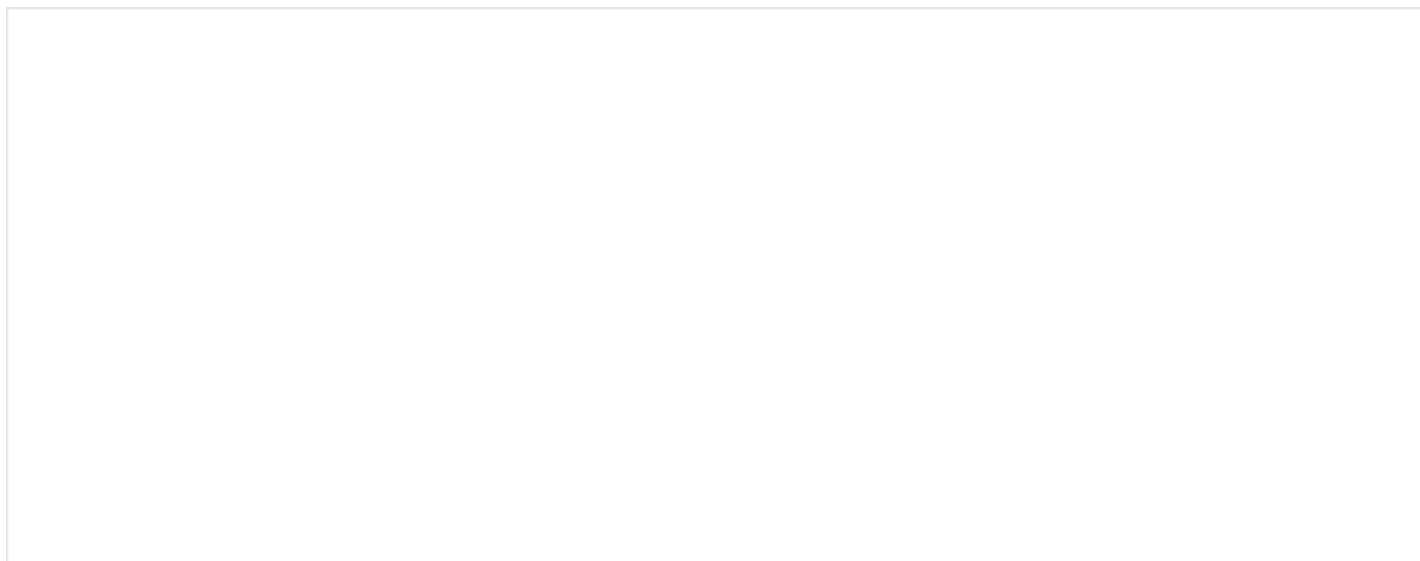
West Virginia Emergency Management Division— the lead agency for severe weather events in the state— is also providing assistance to Monongalia county residents who have experienced damage from the latest storm.

"The Emergency Management Division stands ready at all times to protect the lives and property of West Virginia citizens," said EMB Director GE McCabe.

"Day or night, we are here to help local emergency managers and are standing by for any requests of assistance or resources.

The city of Morgantown is currently taking input from the community, including students, on how to spend funds from the American Rescue Plan Act funds.

One of the uses of these funds is to invest in the city's water and sewer infrastructure.



City of Morgantown ARPA Community Survey Results

Question 1. Rank each of the following service areas in terms of where you think American Rescue Plan funds should be focused.



Morgantown will get \$11 million in federal COVID funding. Residents want better water and sewer

By Lindsay Hapak

Staff Writer