




GOVERNMENT

Flooding leads to state of emergency in five West Virginia counties

BY: **LORI KERSEY** - AUGUST 28, 2023 2:33 PM



 A vehicle drives through an underpass at Slaughter Creek in Kanawha County, W.Va., on Monday, Aug. 28, 2023. Five counties are under a state of emergency after flooding. (Lori Kersey | West Virginia Watch)

Five West Virginia counties are [under a state of emergency](#) after heavy rain throughout the weekend and Monday morning caused “significant flooding,” damaging homes, bridges and roads.

Gov. Jim Justice’s office issued the emergency declaration for Kanawha, Braxton, Calhoun, Clay and Roane counties.

Between one to four inches of rain fell in Boone, central Kanawha, Roane, Clay and Braxton counties mostly on Monday morning, said

James Zvolensky, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Charleston.

Radar indicates that three areas – just north of Cedar Grove, south of Chesapeake, and east of Madison – got eight to nine inches of rain, Zvolensky said.

“So that basically just set us up for a pretty busy morning with flash flooding,” he said.

Kanawha County Manager Jennifer Herrald said based on drive-by assessments Monday, water could have been inside more than 75 living spaces throughout the county. Other affected areas include Slaughter Creek, Little Creek, Cabin Creek, Dry Branch, Kellys Creek and Winifrede.

In Kanawha County, one of the hardest hit communities was Fields Creek Road, off of State W.Va. 61 near Chesapeake.



Isaac Sparks' gray trailer on Fields Creek Road was knocked 30 feet off of its foundation from the flooding on Monday, Aug. 28, 2023. His vehicles were also totaled. (Lori Kersey | West Virginia Watch)

There, water destroyed the home Isaac Sparks' shared with his wife and three kids, knocking the trailer about 30 feet from its foundation.

Sparks said the water was already up to the trailer's porch by around 7 a.m. when he got up for work and to take his young son to school.

“I had to wake my wife and two other kids up, carry them out and take them to Chesapeake to her mamaw and papaw’s,” Sparks said. “When I came back, everything was submerged.”

The floodwaters also destroyed the family’s SUV and sedan, he said.

“They’re totaled,” he said of the vehicles. “Water’s still setting in them. Mud. Probably six inches of mud.”

Several residents said Monday’s flooding event was rare for Fields Creek.

Sparks said his family has lived there four years, and had never before seen the water get as high as it did Monday. Standing feet from the destroyed home Monday afternoon, he doubted if the family would return to the area.

“There was nothing I could do,” Sparks said. “I was just worried about my kids, first thing, and after that – there’s nothing you can do with water. Just watch and wait it out.”

Outside the Fields Creek hollow early Monday afternoon, Brandon Moore waited. The water had mostly receded, but the roadway was blocked not far from the intersection as first responders searched homes and workers from the state Division of Highways cleared the road.

Moore said when he left for work around 5 a.m., it was sprinkling rain, but it had not begun to flood.

“Within two hours or so, my girlfriend called me and said she can’t get out of the driveway because it was flooded,” Moore said. “The whole road was flooded.”

Moore said the water spared his home, which is on higher ground than others.

“The water was still coming under the trailer,” he said. “It washed out some of the hillside right by our house.”

It also left his girlfriend – 13 weeks pregnant with the couple’s first child – stranded inside the home.

“She’s OK. She’s fine,” Moore said. “I couldn’t get a hold of her for a while because the power was out.”

During the high water, Kanawha County Metro 911 answered more than 700 calls and water rescue teams did 22 water rescues,

according to the county.

“It was a slow-moving [weather] event,” Herrald said. “We got short notice, but we had quick response from all our resources.”

According to Justice’s office, mudslides closed both lanes of U.S. 60 in Belle, and the southbound lane of the West Virginia Turnpike near Chelyan at Mile Marker 85.5.

Herrald said Monday’s flooding so far seems to be more significant than the flood that hit the area about a year ago in August 2022.

“The level of water seems to be higher, and it looks like in the Fields Creek area the number of homes that are being reported that have actually moved off their foundation is higher,” Herrald said.

More official assessments are planned for Tuesday morning, when officials from the county, state and West Virginia National Guard planned to go door to door, Herrald said.

This story has been updated with more information.

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