



Flooding Set to Hit Historic 500-Year Levels in Iowa

Thursday , June 12, 2008

FOX NEWS

A "historic hydrologic event" was developing Thursday as swollen rivers in central Iowa were expected to crest at 500-year flood levels, while a man was killed when his vehicle plunged into a stream in Minnesota.

The National Weather Service issued a flood warning for the Cedar River in east central Iowa, saying residents should expect "unprecedented river crests" and calling the situation serious. One of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, levees already has broken.

[Click here to view uReport photos.](#)

"The rest of the levees in the city have not broken down but what the problem is is the water went way up over the top — well over a foot over the top of the levees," Dave Koch, the city's public information officer, told FOX News, adding "it's a 500-year flood and it just overwhelmed us."

The Midwest has been inundated with floods in recent days, with a man dying Thursday in Albert Lea, Minn., after his vehicle fell into a flooded stream. Two others were rescued.

Thousands had evacuated their homes in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City as thunderstorms brought more heavy rain to the flood-ravaged state. One of the city's levees suffered a small breach, according to local reports, and a mandatory evacuation was in effect Thursday for the Cedar Valley neighborhood in southeast Cedar Rapids.

"There are homes, there are businesses, police department, fire department — we're all under water," Koch said.

The storms overnight into Thursday brought up to 5 inches of rain across west central Iowa, raising fears about swollen rivers that are swamping cities across the state.

In Cedar Rapids, rescuers were using boats to evacuate some residents. By Thursday morning, the city had evacuated more than 3,900 homes.

"It's going door to door to make sure people don't need to be rescued, 'cause right now they can't get out on their own," Koch said. "It's just too deep."

The highest rainfall totals primarily were in the Raccoon River basin. The Raccoon River meets the Des Moines River in downtown Des Moines.

The Des Moines River is on the way up because of water being released upstream from Saylorville Lake.

Meteorologist Rod Donavon of the National Weather Service said there was a strip of 3 to 5 inches of rain across west central Iowa and another strip of 2 to 3 inches in central Iowa.

"A lot of water fell in the Raccoon River basin, which is of concern as it moves toward the Des Moines metro area. The Raccoon was not running as high a flow as [was] the Des Moines River," he said.

ADVERTISEMENT

Claim your free
10-minute
AT&T Tech
Support 360
consultation.

[Click for details](#)

BUSINESS IS A CONTACT
SPORT. GAME ON.

Donavon said he had not seen any new river forecast projections but it will "be a concern."

An army of sandbagging volunteers continues to wage a battle against the state's rising rivers.

Gov. Chet Culver has declared 53 of the state's 99 counties as state disaster areas. Nine rivers are at or above historic flood levels.

In Cedar Rapids, where the Cedar River is rising, evacuations pushed deeper into flood-prone neighborhoods on the city's southeast side Wednesday night. City officials imposed a 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew in evacuated neighborhoods.

Several emergency shelters are open, and the city had closed its bridges over the Cedar River.

City Manager Jim Prosser said the river might exceed the capacity of the protections Cedar Rapids had in place to control it.

"Our primary focus now is the life, safety and welfare of the public," he said.

The City Council voted to give city officials emergency powers until the floodwaters had subsided.

Public Works Director Dave Elgin told the City Council on Wednesday to prepare for a long flood — not just a record-setting one.

Iowa City officials approved a mandatory evacuation ordinance at a special council meeting on Wednesday. The city put the order into effect around 2 a.m. on Thursday for residents in the Normandy Drive area on the city's north side near the Iowa River.

In Coralville, residents along two streets had until 5 p.m. Thursday to evacuate. The city also is asking that residents try to avoid using running water and toilets while it is raining, because the volume of water is overwhelming the water plant.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

SEARCH

GO

Click here for FOX News RSS Feeds

Advertise on FOX News Channel, FOXNews.com and FOX News Radio

Jobs at FOX News Channel.

Internships At Fox News (Summer Application Deadline is March 15, 2007)

Terms of use. Privacy Statement. For FOXNews.com comments write to foxnews@foxnews.com; For FOX News Channel comments write to comments@foxnews.com

© Associated Press. All rights reserved.

This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Copyright 2008 FOX News Network, LLC. All rights reserved.

All market data delayed 20 minutes.