

News Release from: Salem Police Dept.
CITY OF SALEM FLOOD-HIGH WATER INFORMATION
Posted: January 20th, 2012 6:15 PM

*** UPDATE January 20, 1810 hours ***

The City of Salem is continuing to address and coordinate flood recovery and planning activities. The Emergency Operations Center suspended operations on the afternoon of January 20, but is prepared to be reactivated if necessary. Ongoing operations are now being coordinated among the appropriate City departments.

Public safety has been the highest priority, with personnel from every department in the City assisting in the coordinated efforts. At the height of the crisis, over 400 City personnel were working in the field. There were over 50 road closures, more than one hundred thousand sandbags distributed, over 800 traffic barricades placed and hundreds of people were assisted to safety from the rising waters. The Salem Public Library and the Center 50 Plus both opened their doors to those displaced by the waters, and arranged with the Red Cross to find longer term accommodations. The City also called on many volunteers for various tasks around the City and received a tremendous response.

The Emergency Operations Center was open continuously for nearly 36 hours, with over 100 personnel working together to coordinate operations and communications.

The City has worked diligently to keep the public informed. The City website continues to show road closure, resource availability, sewage cleanup and other information pertinent to the event. A non-emergency informational phone line was established for the public to call with flood and water information and eight locations around the City were established for the public to get sandbags.

City Manager Linda Norris signed a Declaration of Emergency, and City staff are working with the State and Federal governments on recovery issues. We have partnered with many government and private entities throughout the event to maximize our resources. Existing partnerships and working relationships were essential to our operations.

The City of Salem is aggressively working to assess damages from this event. Cleanup efforts are underway including street cleaning, clearing debris from streams and clearing parks. Bridges and structures are being inspected for structural integrity and roadways continue to reopen as waters recede. The City's water and sewer systems remain intact and operational and services to the public are rapidly returning to normal.

During this event, the spirit of volunteerism came through in our community. From the truck driver who volunteered to drive sandbags around the area, to The Home Depot donating seven yards of sand, to Lowe's having a sandbag station, to the many people who showed up on their own to assist in filling sandbags, to the Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers who helped with many tasks, our community rose to the occasion to help their neighbors in this time of need.

Salem Mayor Anna Peterson was very engaged with City staff throughout the event and stated "Public safety continues to be the highest priority for the City as we begin cleaning up from the storm and flooding. I was pleased that the Emergency Response Plan went into operation and all departments worked smoothly to address life and safety issues first. I am proud of the community's response, and

everyone's willingness to pull together and get the job done."

Please continue to refer to the City of Salem website at www.cityofsalem.net/fire/emergencymanagement for road closure and other information related to this event. The non-emergency information line (503-540-9015) will stay in service through the weekend.

*** UPDATE January 20, 1125 hours ***

The City of Salem Emergency Operations Center is continuing to coordinate flood recovery and safety planning activities throughout the City.

The critical infrastructure of the City remains intact and operational. Resources continue to be dedicated to address flooding issues while still maintaining essential services to the public. The City water supply has remained intact and operational throughout the flooding event, and water IS safe to drink from the City system. However, even as the flood waters recede, the public is reminded that emergencies of many kinds can happen in our area with little or no warning. Everyone should have at home an adequate supply of bottled drinking water and emergency food. Emergency kits should be prepared at all times to include at least one gallon of fresh water per person per day. For further information on emergency kits and how to prepare, please refer to the City of Salem website at [www.cityofsalem.net/fire/emergency management](http://www.cityofsalem.net/fire/emergencymanagement)

Water levels on most creeks and streams in the Salem area continue to go down. The water level of the Willamette River in Salem is currently 27 feet and is expected to crest at approximately 29 feet between 4:00 pm and 10:00 pm today, but waters are receding in many areas around the City. Several roads and streets have been re-opened and City crews are evaluating the safety of opening additional roads. Please continue to exercise caution when out and about. Report high water on roadways, and do not attempt to drive through high water areas. Refer to the City of Salem website for road closure information.

Efforts on January 19 were primarily focused on addressing immediate safety and security concerns, identifying hazardous areas and conditions, protecting infrastructure and safeguarding the public. These efforts kept the majority of our resources very busy throughout the day and night hours. Several street sweepers were out throughout the night cleaning up streets that had been flooded.

Operations today will be focused on recovery from the emergency situations encountered yesterday and preparing for further rain, wind and possible rising water levels. Street barricades and sandbags will be removed when appropriate, the bridge on Airport Rd SE between State St and Mission St will be inspected for structural integrity and crews will be cleaning up throughout Salem. Many of the people who left their residences are now able to return. As waters recede in areas creeks and streams, crews will be working to remove debris when it is safe. Please DO NOT attempt to remove debris or objects from streams and creeks, as conditions are still hazardous and pose a substantial risk.

If your house or business experienced damage from a sewage backup, information about how to safely clean the area is posted on the City website. Please examine the areas that experienced high water or flooding during events from yesterday and try to identify any actions that can be taken to prevent or minimize and possible flooding in the future.

The non-emergency public phone line for flood related information is 503-540-9015.

*** UPDATE January 19, 2105 hours ***

The City of Salem will continue to operate throughout the night on January 19. City personnel will be working throughout the night monitoring water levels and flood conditions and protecting people and property.

With rains expected to increase again, we will be evaluating the need for further possible closures and/or evacuations. The non-emergency phone line to report and/or inquire about flood issues (503-540-9015) will remain open throughout the night. As always, utilize 911 for emergency situations. Road closure information is available on the City website at www.cityofsalem.net

The previously listed locations to obtain sandbags will be open and accessible through the night, and staff will be working to make sure adequate supplies are available. Home Depot at 3795 Hagers Grove Rd SE has donated seven yards of sand for use in this situation, and the City of Salem has supplied sandbags for that location. The sand is in the parking lot of the store and will be accessible throughout the night as well.

As weather conditions change and the nighttime hours advance, we would like to again warn the public about the potential dangers of the ever-changing situation. It can be difficult to see standing water in the darkness, and this makes it even more important to be aware of your surroundings. Be sure to honor and obey road closures and barricades. High water can be very deceptive, and the potential for being overcome and/or swept away by moving water remains high.

Be sure to call 911 immediately if you see hazards, and please help watch out for friends and neighbors that may not have the ability to fully care for themselves.

*** UPDATE January 19, 1835 hours ***

The City of Salem is continuing to address public safety as water levels are projected to continue to rise. Despite the tremendous strain on resources because of this situation, City resources are providing basic and emergency services to our citizens. Salem City Manager Linda Norris signed an Emergency Declaration at approximately 1:15 pm on January 19. The Declaration, in conjunction with Declarations of Emergency from the County and State of Oregon, allows the City of Salem to redirect funds for emergency use and to request access to appropriate support from State and/or Federal resources.

The City of Salem Public Works Department has worked tirelessly throughout the day to divert traffic away from hazards, provide resources to the community and protect critical City resources. One substantial water main that was threatened by flood waters was saved and secured by Public Works crews. The City drinking water remains safe for consumption.

More roadways are becoming flooded and are subsequently being closed to traffic. Some of the major roadways that are currently closed are Turner Rd between Cascades Gateway Park and Kuebler Blvd, both 12th and 13th Streets SE between McGilchrist and Hines St, and 25th St SE south of McGilchrist St. There are more than 35 roadways closed at this time. For a full list of these closures, please refer to the City of Salem Website at www.cityofsalem.net

The City of Salem has received over 200,000 sandbags from the City of Albany and continues to utilize mutual aid agreements and partnerships with other entities throughout the region to address this evolving situation.

A map has been created and placed on the City website that shows the projected impact of high water on our community when the Willamette River reaches its projected crest of 30 feet at approximately 4:00 pm on January 20th. This map is a projection based on data from past flooding incidents and current information. It is a projection only, and is provided to alert residents and businesses of areas of increased risks of flooding. Regardless of where one is in relation to the areas shown on this map, always be aware of the surroundings and take all appropriate safety measures based on observations.

The Red Cross has established a shelter at 645 Clover St in Ausmville and is continuing to support the City of Salem as people come to the library and Center 50 Plus to seek refuge. Cherriots is also assisting in providing transportation for those who are being displaced.

Public safety continues to be a priority of the City of Salem, and we have received many offers from private parties to help and volunteer their time and/or resources. These offers are greatly appreciated, and we will continue to work in partnership with these resources as they become available.

*** UPDATE January 19/1315 hours ***

The City of Salem continues to coordinate response to the current high water and heavy rains in the area, which has been determined to be at least a 100 year event. The City Emergency Operations Center is continuing to coordinate resources both within the City and with entities and agencies throughout the region.

The water level of the Willamette River is currently 21 feet. It is projected to crest at a level of approximately 30 feet sometime on Friday, with 32 feet considered to be major flood stage. There are currently 29 streets closed due to high water and numerous others affected by standing water. There have been many who have voluntarily evacuated their residences to escape the water.

The City of Salem has established a non-emergency information line for the public to call in order to obtain general information about the current situation. This phone number is 503-540-9015 and is currently being manned. This is a non-emergency line. Please continue to call 911 for emergencies.

For those who are displaced, the Center 50 Plus located at 2615 Portland Rd NE and the Salem Public Library are both open and available for temporary shelter.

Road closure information is now available to be viewed on the City of Salem website at www.cityofsalem.net Please refer to this website for road closure information.

Sandbags continue to be in very high demand, and City staff are working very hard to make sure there are enough to meet demand. Those who wish to get pre-filled sandbags are asked to go to the City of Salem Public Works facility at 1410 20th St SE. Sand and bags are located at the other sites previously listed, and we are working to get staff and volunteers to those locations to assist the public at those locations as well. Please be advised that the sandbag site at South Salem High School has closed.

As the situation continues to progress and additional needs are identified, volunteers will become even more important than ever to assist in various duties and tasks. Those wishing and available to volunteer are asked to contact "Hands On" at 877-372-4141 or 503-364-1005.

This flood and weather situation continues to evolve. We urge the public to be careful, to be aware of their surroundings and to not take unnecessary chances around high water. Most fatalities during flood events occur as a result of individuals misjudging the depth and strength of the water. If you are in a safe location and not in danger due to rising water, we ask that you stay where you are. Road conditions are constantly changing and please do not venture out for non-essential reasons.

Please be prepared in case of the loss of power and/or water. Make sure emergency kits are stocked and current. Emergency kits should contain any medications for several days, one gallon of water per person per day, non-perishable foods, radios with charged batteries in order to monitor current information, flashlights with fresh batteries and necessary supplies for any pets. This is just a portion of the contents needed for an emergency kit. For further details, please refer to the City of Salem website at [www.cityofsalem.net/fire/emergency management](http://www.cityofsalem.net/fire/emergency%20management). Also, have an evacuation plan with your family. Make sure all members of the family know emergency contact numbers and have a staging and contact point in case the family gets separated during evacuation.

The City of Salem Emergency Operations Center will continue to operate through the critical times of this situation. We will work to keep the public updated as to the evolving situation both through media releases as well as our website.

Due to high water throughout the area and the expected continued precipitation, the City of Salem has activated its Emergency Operations Center. There are numerous areas of flooding throughout the region, and the City of Salem is mobilizing resources to address the safety of the public.

Most of the creeks in the Salem area are at very high levels, and with precipitation expected to continue, those water levels are expected to continue to rise. At this time efforts are being concentrated on situations where life and safety are at risk.

The City of Salem has several sandbag stations available for the public get sandbags for their property. Those locations are listed below. For those being displaced, the Red Cross is working to establish shelters throughout the area. We will provide locations of shelters as they become operational.

We are asking for assistance from the public keeping themselves safe in these rapidly changing conditions.

- If you are in a building and notice water levels rising outside, consider evacuating before the water levels reach a point that creates a dangerous or hazardous situation.
- While driving, observe and obey road closure signs, barriers and/or indicators. Do not assume your vehicle can get through the high water.
- While driving in high water areas, be aware that some manhole covers get dislodged due to water pressure.
- Stay away from creeks, rivers and other bodies of water. Water levels can change rapidly and water currents are running very swift.
- As winds increase and rains continue, the possibility of downed trees and power lines increase. Stay away from downed lines and report them to 911 immediately

This is a rapidly changing situation and the City of Salem will work to put out updates as they become available.

Sandbag locations:

- Roths IGA, West Salem-1130 Wallace Rd NW
- City of Salem Public Works- 14th St SE
- Orchard Heights Park-1165 Orchard Heights Rd NW
- South Salem High School-1910 Church St SE
- Swegle Elementary School-4485 Market St NE
- D St at 14th St NE
- Lowes-1930 Turner Rd SE