

NEWS ADVISORY



May 16, 2011

For immediate release

Flood Season Update Monday, May 16

From Mayor John Engen:

Spring runoff is in full swing as last winter's deep snows melt in the mountains. As Missoula residents hear about potential flooding in the Flathead and Bitterroot valleys, and they see our Clark Fork River rising as it goes through town, they have concerns. So here's what we know.

The National Weather Service does not predict flooding of private property over the banks of the Clark Fork River in the city. What's expected at this point is for the river to reach the levels we saw in 1997 and to go a little higher. Expressed in numbers, the Clark Fork River gauge above Missoula hit 12.6 feet in 1997; today at midday, the National Weather Service reported it was 9.6 feet.

In the city of Missoula, three levees protect many riverfront properties. Two of them are along the Clark Fork River, and one is on Grant Creek near the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. They are certified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, our 2004 project along 39th Street provided for excess water from Pattee Creek to flow to Playfair Park with protection from a ring levee.

There is a possibility every spring of very local flooding when creeks come over their banks. Many of us are familiar, for instance, with Rattlesnake Creek in its lower reaches near Greenough Park. We are monitoring water levels every day and reporting information to the Missoula County Department of Emergency Services and the National Weather Service. Missoula County sheriff's deputies, Missoula Police Department officers and City and County Public Works staff members are doing this too. We are also prepared to protect critical public infrastructure, such as roads and bridges.

People living in areas prone to flooding should be prepared to protect their property. And anyone who sees rising water of concern or water that is covering or crossing a road should call 911 immediately so that a responder can visit the area.

Please remember that high, fast water is dangerous. Keep pets, children and yourselves away from water and please wait for that raft or canoe trip until the waters go down.

For updates around the clock, Missoula County residents can call the Missoula Disaster and Emergency Services Information line at 258-4636 (258-INFO) for a recorded message that's updated every day. The Missoula County DES office is also available at 258-4469.

There are number of websites where you can monitor water levels and flows and see the latest predictions. They include

National Weather Service, Missoula

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/mso/>

Montana Disaster & Emergency Services

<http://dma.mt.gov/des/>

Missoula County Office of Emergency Services

<http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/oes/>

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