

Fact Sheet

FLOOD STATUS MESSAGING

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Flooding can happen at any time. Heavy rains, snowmelt, spring breakup and ice jams, wind-related storm surges, or the failure of dams can cause flooding.

Flood forecast messages enable Conservation Authorities and Municipalities to prepare for, track and manage local flooding. Advance warning provides these agencies with the opportunity to put emergency plans into operation, evacuate communities if necessary, and secure property in areas that are more likely to flood.

Monitoring weather and flood conditions is a shared responsibility of Conservation Authorities, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and Environment Canada. When flooding is possible or about to occur, Conservation Authorities issue flood messages to municipal emergency management officials and the media. The municipal officials then take action to warn local residents.

At any time of the year, when there is flooding, Conservation Authorities and MNR issue three levels of messages:

WATERSHED CONDITIONS STATEMENT: general notices of potential flooding or other conditions that pose a safety risk. There are two kinds of statements:

- **Water Safety** indicates that high flows, unsafe banks, melting ice or other factors could be dangerous for users such as anglers, boaters, swimmers, children or pets. Flooding is not expected.
- **Flood Outlook** gives early notice of the potential for flooding based on weather forecasts calling for heavy rain, snow melt, high wind or other conditions that could lead to high runoff, ice jams, lakeshore flooding or erosion.

FLOOD WATCH notifies that the potential for flooding exists within specific watercourses and municipalities. Municipalities, emergency services and individual landowners in flood-prone areas should prepare.

FLOOD WARNING: Flooding is imminent or already occurring in specific watercourses or municipalities. Municipalities and individuals should take action to deal with flood conditions. This may include road closures and evacuations.

Conservation Authority Roles and Responsibilities

Conservation Authorities are responsible for monitoring and predicting flood flows and water levels within their watersheds, operating flood control structures such as dams and disseminating flood messages to local municipalities and agencies.

Conservation Authorities work closely with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Canada to provide advice to municipalities in the preparation of flood contingency plans and during the emergency response process.

Conservation Authorities and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources use information gathered from stream gauges, weather stations, snow surveys, meteorological forecasts and computer models to forecast potential floods.

Programs and services to prevent and control flooding offered by Conservation Authorities include:

- monitoring conditions;
- computer modeling and forecasting flooding;
- issuing of flood messages;
- regulation of development in flood prone areas;
- providing planning support and advice to municipalities to minimize the impact of flooding;
- land acquisition;
- protecting significant ecosystems such as wetlands and forests that help to control flooding; and educating the public.

For more information on flood forecasting and warning, please visit:

Conservation Ontario's website:

<http://www.conservationontario.ca/projects/floodstatus.html> This website provides links to Conservation Authorities' flood messages. Many Conservation Authorities can communicate directly with local residents, agencies and municipalities through email, twitter or via their websites.

To find a link to your local Conservation Authority website for flood messages:

http://www.conservationontario.ca/projects/floods_conditions.html

The **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources** provides flood forecast messages to Conservation Authorities and municipalities to enable them to prepare for, track and manage local flooding. A fact sheet and Frequently Asked Questions are available.

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/EmergencyManagement/2ColumnSubPage/239496.html>

For more information:

Don Pearson, General Manager Conservation Ontario

dpearson@conservationontario.ca Tel: 905.895.0716 ext 231 Cell: 905-251-3268

Jane Lewington, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Conservation Ontario

jlewington@conservationontario.ca Tel: 905.895.0716 ext 222 Cell: 905-717-0301