

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE BUFFALO, NY
800 AM EDT THU OCT 30 2008

...THIS WEEK IS WINTER WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN NEW YORK...

GOVERNOR DAVID PATERSON HAS PROCLAIMED THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 26TH TO NOVEMBER 1ST AS WINTER WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN THE EMPIRE STATE. THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE JOINS WITH THE GOVERNOR AND THE NEW YORK STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY IN PROMOTING WINTER WEATHER SAFETY TO ALL NEW YORKERS.

ALTHOUGH IT MAY SEEM ODD TO THE CASUAL OBSERVER, FLOODING IS ACTUALLY A COMMON HAZARD IN NEW YORK DURING THE WINTER MONTHS. THERE ARE PERIODS OF THAW WHICH CAN PRODUCE ENOUGH SNOWMELT TO SATURATE THE GROUND AND INCREASE THE RIVER FLOWS. IF THAT IS COMBINED WITH A SIGNIFICANT RAINFALL, THEN FLOODING CAN OCCUR. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED IN JANUARY, 1996 OVER MUCH OF WESTERN NEW YORK. A RAPID SNOWMELT ON JANUARY 17 REDUCED A 1 TO 2 FOOT SNOWPACK TO BARE GROUND AND RELEASED UP TO 3 INCHES OF WATER. THAT COMBINED WITH A 1 TO 2 INCH RAINFALL TO PRODUCE MAJOR FLOODING ALONG THE ALLEGHANY AND UPPER GENESEE RIVERS.

SIGNIFICANT FLOODING ALSO OCCURRED IN WESTERN NEW YORK IN JANUARY, 1998. WHILE THE NORTH COUNTRY WAS SUFFERING FROM A MAJOR ICE STORM, MAJOR FLOODING OCCURRED ALONG THE ALLEGHANY AND GENESEE RIVERS. IN ADDITION TO THE ICE STORM, RECORD FLOODING OCCURRED ALONG THE BLACK RIVER AT WATERTOWN.

ANOTHER WINTER FLOOD HAZARD IS CAUSED BY ICE JAMS IN RIVERS AND STREAMS. OFTEN DURING THE WINTER, ICE WILL FORM ON A RIVER OR STREAM. THE ICE CAN BECOME SEVERAL INCHES THICK DURING A PROLONGED COLD SPELL. IF THE RIVER FLOW WERE TO SUDDENLY INCREASE DUE TO SNOWMELT OR HEAVY RAIN, THE ICE CAN BREAK UP INTO LARGE SLABS AND MOVE DOWNSTREAM UNTIL IT REACHES AN OBSTRUCTION SUCH AS A RIVER BEND, ISLAND, OR BRIDGE. THE RESULTING ICE JAM ACTS MUCH LIKE A DAM, BLOCKING THE FLOW OF WATER AND CAUSING FLOODING UPSTREAM. IN SOME CASES THE JAM CAN SUDDENLY BREAK AND RELEASE A SURGE WATER AND ICE DOWNSTREAM.

WHILE ICE JAMS TEND TO FORM AT THE SAME LOCATIONS EVERY YEAR, IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT EXACTLY WHEN THEY

WILL FORM, OR WHEN THEY WILL BREAK. PEOPLE NEED TO REMAIN ALERT FOR SUDDEN CHANGES IN WATER LEVELS.

YOUR NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE AND LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS WORK IN PARTNERSHIP TO MONITOR THE FORMATION AND ICE JAMS AND ASSESS THE POTENTIAL FOR FLOODING. FLOOD WATCHES ARE ISSUED WHEN THE FLOOD POTENTIAL INCREASES, AND THEY ARE UPGRADED TO FLOOD OR FLASH FLOOD WARNINGS WHEN FLOODING IS IMMINENT OR OCCURRING.

IF YOU LIVE OR TRAVEL NEAR A RIVER OR STREAM, YOU MUST REMAIN ALERT FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF FLOODING DURING THE WINTER MONTHS AND HEED THE ADVICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS.