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Sheriff

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flood Watch Issued for Portage County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated

Due to the current ongoing Flood Watch issued by the National Weather Service (<https://www.weather.gov/grb/>), Portage County agencies have been in contact with individuals from the City of Stevens Point, Villages, and Towns to help coordinate all of the work that is being done to help the county get through this event. The Village of Park Ridge has declared an emergency due to the flooding. The Portage County Emergency Operation Center (EOC) has been activated to assist in providing any needed resources to those municipalities in need. Portage County has provided local municipalities with access to a supply of sandbags. Some residents have already experienced flooding in their homes; please contact your local municipality and municipal leaders for assistance related to flooding as we are also coordinating with them to distribute supplies to individuals in need.

Portage County Highway Department crews have transitioned from massive snow removal efforts to flood mitigation in order to protect our citizens and infrastructure. There are multiple roadways throughout the county that have standing water in low-lying areas, as well as water flowing over them in those areas where a lot of water is accumulating. Please drive safely and pay attention to closure signs. Portage County Highway Department crews and many others have been working throughout the day to clear or sign road hazards as quickly as they can. Travel problems will continue to exist through the night and tomorrow. Water over the roadway is not expected to subside overnight and temperatures are expected to drop below freezing tonight. These circumstances may create difficult driving conditions tomorrow.

Because this type of flooding is an ongoing event please be prepared even if you have yet to experience any intrusion. Consider purchasing a sump pump or check your current sump pump to make certain it is operational.

If you need assistance please contact the Portage County Communications Center at 715-346-1400 or dial 911 in case of emergency.

Please read the following from the Wisconsin Department of Health:

Follow these tips **during and after a flood**:

- **Do not drive through flood waters.** It takes just 12 inches of rushing water to carry away a car. When you encounter flood water, turn around, don't drown.
- **Stay out of flood waters.** Flood water can contain bacteria, sewage, sharp objects, and other dangerous items.

- **Drain basements slowly.** Basements containing standing water should be emptied gradually – no more than 2-3 inches per day. If a basement is drained too quickly, the water pressure outside the walls will be greater than the water pressure inside, which may cause the basement floor and walls to crack and collapse.
- **Shut off electrical power if you suspect damage to your home.** Even if the damage isn't easily seen, shut off electrical power, natural gas and propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- **Use battery-powered lanterns to light homes rather than candles.** Candles could trigger an explosion if there is a gas leak.
- **Use generators at least 20 feet from your home.** Generators create carbon monoxide. In enclosed spaces, the carbon monoxide can build up and cause sickness or death.
- **Throw out food if you can't be sure it's safe.** Throw out any refrigerated food if your power was out for four hours or more. If frozen foods still have ice crystals, they can be refrozen. Any food that was touched by floodwaters— even canned food— should be thrown out.
- **Look out for mold.** Follow the recommended steps for cleaning mold growth.
- **Check your water supply.** If you have municipal water, run your faucet for at least five minutes before using it. If you have a well that touched flood water, follow steps to disinfect it.

For more information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Flood Hazards and Recovery page.

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