

2023 July Floods

Notification Pursuant to 19 VSA 10g(h)*

Joint Transportation Oversight Committee, the Joint Fiscal Office, the Joint Fiscal Committee and the House & Senate Transportation Committees

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Introduction

Summary flooding events beginning July 7th

Vermont has had a wet, rainy summer, with few days of sunshine in a row. On Friday, July 7th, Vermont experienced heavy rain in several severe storm cell outbursts. The Southwest region was hit first - Route 4 in Killington experienced a large landslide due to the Friday rain, closing Route 4 for 3 days. Route 100 in West Bridgewater also saw major flooding, and Bridge 116 in that town was heavily damaged during that initial rainfall event. At this point a temporary bridge has been installed and additional roadway work is in progress to re-open this route.

AOT District employees were deployed in response to both of those events. AOT's primary concern in any event is public safety. Our role is to mitigate hazards to the traveling public, which may include closing roads. During active flooding, AOT attempts to mitigate water blockage issues, clear hazards, and keep drainage ditches open to reduce as much damage as possible.

Beginning Sunday, July 9th, the Agency learned of more incoming weather forecasted for later that day. AOT launched its scripted statewide strategy to respond as and where necessary – and the Transportation Incident Command Center (TICC) was officially activated that day. The TICC's purpose is to coordinate and manage Statewide, Regional, and District response efforts and support any relevant missions as directed by the State Emergency Operations Center.

Due to the track of the inbound weather, AOT activated its Southwest Regional Command and placed the other 4 Regional Commands on standby. District staff across the entire state began patrolling their roadways as the storm commenced in the Southwest region. Vermont Rail Systems and New England Central Railroad also commenced patrols of the rail lines.

36 hours of steady rain created major impacts across the state, with the majority of damage in the southern regions. Some locations saw as much as 9 inches of rain. The highest rain amounts occurred around the spine of the Green Mountains, and AOT experienced significant damage to sites in the Southeast, Southwest and Capital regions.

Damages in these regions included significant washouts, bridges compromised or destroyed, landslides, and mudslides. Multiple roadways were under water and had continuous flooding. AOT deployed crews to respond to emergencies as they came in, and the TICC (Transportation

Incident Command Center) was officially activated on Sunday, July 9, 2023, to coordinate statewide and regional response efforts.

Very early Monday morning Immediate Initial Priorities and an Immediate Order of Initial Response were established and communicated to the 5 Regions which encompass the 9 AOT Districts including all 60 Garages statewide.

Immediate Initial Priorities

- Life Safety
- Employees Stranded
- Equipment Stranded
- Materials and Supply Chains Impacted
- Contractor and Consultant Availability
- Any Immediate Partner Agency/Department Needs

Prioritization of Response

- The National Highway System
- Major East-West Routes
- Key routes to and from Hospitals and Critical Resources
- Feeder Routes
- Towns

The Ludlow area experienced massive flooding, with most of the town under water and extensive damages to roadways, local homes and businesses. The Green Mountain Railroad Bellows Falls-Rutland line was also significantly compromised, with one section in Ludlow experiencing 140 feet long, 60 feet deep washout due to a failed culvert. 27 miles was opened Friday night (7/21) from Bellows Falls to the Talc Mill in Ludlow.

The Capitol region also was hit hard, especially municipalities. The city of Barre and the city of Montpelier were underwater, with significant damage to state buildings, local businesses, and homes. There was a landslide on Route 62 in Barre, which resulted in a road closure, and Interstate 89 Northbound and Southbound were closed overnight just north of Exit 8 due to flooding. The Green Mountain Railroad Barre-Montpelier line was also heavily damaged and parts remain closed, it is expected to open within the next two weeks. The District 6 complex area on the Barre-Montpelier road was decimated in the flooding, displacing the Capital Region District staff, Central Garage staff, the Technical Training Branch and Local Roads staff. (approx. 50 staff impacted).

As the central and southern part of the state attempted to begin recovery from flooding, more rain arrived on Sunday, July 16th. In that round of rain, the Northeast region experienced flooding, resulting in washouts and road closures.

Of the entire state, Grand Isle, western Chittenden, and parts of Franklin County are the only areas that experienced minimal damage. Most everywhere else in state experienced some level of flooding and/or damage from these rain events.

AOT and local resources are working hard to mitigate damages and recover from the flooding. AOT has deployed resources from less heavily hit areas of the state to assist with repair to damaged areas. Multiple employees have been deployed to support the disaster response and those not deployed are taking on additional duties to keep our normal workload production.

At this point, we're assisting towns primarily with access to temporary bridges, assessing damage on town highways and bridges, and identification of contracting resources. As of the end of the day Monday, 7/24, we are currently providing resources to 13 towns; all towns which have requested assistance have been aided.

We're very proud of the hard work and impressive response times of our AOT staff. While Hurricane Irene damage feels too fresh in our minds, our teams have once again come together to help pull our little state back together and get the people of Vermont back on their feet.

Transportation Facilities Closed/Reopened

At the height of the series of storms 136 **State roads were closed or partially closed.** At the start of the day Tuesday, 7/25, there are 7 full closures and 10 one-lane closures.

Roadway Status Tuesday morning, 7/25

Closed: 7

Partially Open: 10

Reopened Since Start of Event: 128

Both Lanes Remain Closed

1. VT 12 Montpelier
2. US 302 Barre City
3. VT 131 Cavendish
4. VT 113 Bridge 11 Vershire
5. VT 110 Bridge 12 Chelsea
6. VT 30 Bridge 42 Jamaica
7. I91 NB to I89 SB Off Ramp – Hartford

One Lane Remains Closed

1. VT 12 Berlin
2. US 4 Bridgewater
3. US 4 Hartford
4. VT 107 Stockbridge
5. VT 110 Bridge 13 Chelsea
6. VT 103 Proctorsville
7. VT 125 Middlebury
8. VT 125 Ripton

- 9. VT 15 Hardwick
- 10. VT 15 Johnson

Highway Bridges

- 3 State bridges remain closed – temporary bridges are in route.
 - VT 30 BR42 Jamaica
 - VT113 BR11 Vershire
 - VT110 BR12 Chelsea
- Bridge inspections began on July 11th; to date AOT has inspected 457 State and Town bridges with 296 inspection findings throughout the state.

Railroads

Both the Amtrak Vermonter and Amtrak Ethan Allen were impacted with closures, as of the evening of Friday, 7/21, both services have resumed normal operations.

The Green Mountain Railroad – Rutland to Bellows Falls. There are two major wash outs in Ludlow and East Wallingford along with other extensive impacts. The line is partially open from Bellows Falls to the talc mine in Ludlow.

The Green Mountain Railroad – Montpelier to Barre was also heavily impacted; on Monday, 7/24, the section between Montpelier Junction and the roundabout at Routes 2/302 was restored. It is anticipated that the line will be fully open no later than Friday, August 4th.

Rail Trails

Open

- Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail (no damage sustained)
- Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail (no damage sustained)
- Beebe Spur (no damaged sustained)

Closed

- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail

Public Transit

- Enhanced Shuttle Service is being provided to residents in Johnson and Hardwick.

AOT Facilities

Central Garage Complex Route 302; Barre-Montpelier Road

- The Central Garage facility in Berlin was heavily damaged in the flooding, displacing all maintenance repair activity and staff.
- The Technical Training Branch and the VT Local Roads Staff, located at the VTrans Training Center next to the Central Garage was also flooded and remains closed.

- The District 6 Maintenance Garage, also located in the Central Garage complex was flooded and remains closed.
- Approximately 50 employees have been impacted.
- Vehicles were relocated out of the facility prior to flooding.

Other Garages

The Woodstock District garage was flooded, and the Londonderry and Ludlow garages were completely isolated for several days. These facilities are back on-line.

State Airports

All 10 State owned airports were not impacted by the storms and are operational. Part of the Knapp State Airport in Berlin is being utilized as a staging area for rescue and recovery teams.

Federal Recovery Funding; Impacts to FY23 Program & FY24 Budget Process

Federal Funding

FHWA Emergency Relief

FHWA ER is a special program from the Highway Trust Fund for the repair or reconstruction of Federal-aid highways and roads on Federal lands which have suffered serious damage as a result of (1) natural disasters or (2) catastrophic failures from an external cause. This program, commonly referred to as the emergency relief or ER program, supplements the commitment of resources by States, their political subdivisions, or other Federal agencies to help pay for unusually heavy expenses resulting from extraordinary conditions.

Federal Share

1. *100%*: Emergency repair (ER) work to restore essential travel, minimize the extent of damage, or protect the remaining facilities, accomplished in the first 270 days after the disaster occurs, may be reimbursed at 100 percent Federal share. Most projects and expenses from the July flooding will be in this category.
2. *80%/20% or 90%/10%* - Approved ER funds are available at the pro-rata share that would normally apply to the Federal-aid facility damaged. The benefit of the projects that qualify under this category is that it will not require obligation of FHWA formula program funds. All things being equal, these projects would allow the possibility for Vermont to program more federal aid projects in the future.

FEMA Public Assistance

FEMA PA provides funding for emergency assistance to save lives and protect property and assists with funding for permanently restoring community infrastructure affected by a federally declared incident. For VTrans, the Rail program will be the primary recipient of FEMA PA.

Federal Share

Emergency Work	Federal Share	Impacted Programs from July Flooding
Category A - Debris Removal	100%	
Category B - Emergency Protective Measures	75%	Rail and HWYs, incl. Towns
Permanent Work		
Category C - Roads and Bridges	75%	Rail and HWYs, incl. Towns
Category E - Public Buildings and Contents	75%	Berlin Rt 302 Facility costs not covered by insurance
Category Z - Administrative	100%	

Impacts to the FY23 Program and FY24 Budget Process

Response and recovery investment costs are evolving. A recap of the position of the disaster costs, the impacts to the FY24 program and the FY25 budgeting process will be provided once the situation has stabilized. There will be impacts to the current FY24 Capital Program which may include pausing projects which will result in delays. Once we have an understanding of the impacts to the program, we will provide updates regarding which projects will be impacted.

Next Steps

Legislative Updates

- If there are legislative requests for assistance, please contact Michele Boomhower (michele.boomhower@vermont.gov) or Costa Pappis (costa.pappis@vermont.gov)
- The Administration hosted a full Legislative briefing on July 21st from 2-3:30, the recording can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzC9nePuXcM>.
- The Agency will continue to brief the Chairs of House & Senate Transportation; Transportation Committee members may reach out to their Chairs with questions or concerns.

****Notification Pursuant to 19 VSA 10g(h)***

(h) Should capital projects in the Transportation Program be delayed because of unanticipated problems with permitting, right-of-way acquisition, construction, local concern, or availability of federal or State funds, the Secretary is authorized to advance projects in the approved

*Transportation Program. **The Secretary is further authorized to undertake projects to resolve emergency or safety issues. Upon authorizing a project to resolve an emergency or safety issue, the Secretary shall give prompt notice of the decision and action taken to the Joint Fiscal Office and to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation when the General Assembly is in session, and when the General Assembly is not in session, to the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee, the Joint Fiscal Office, and the Joint Fiscal Committee.** Should an approved project in the current Transportation Program require additional funding to maintain the approved schedule, the Agency is authorized to allocate the necessary resources. However, the Secretary shall not delay or suspend work on approved projects to reallocate funding for other projects except when other funding options are not available. In such case, the Secretary shall notify the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee, the Joint Fiscal Office, and the Joint Fiscal Committee when the General Assembly is not in session and the House and Senate Committees on Transportation and the Joint Fiscal Office when the General Assembly is in session. With respect to projects in the approved Transportation Program, the Secretary shall notify, in the district affected, the regional planning commission, the municipality, legislators, the House and Senate Committees on Transportation, and the Joint Fiscal Office of any change that likely will affect the fiscal year in which the project is planned to go to construction. No project shall be canceled without the approval of the General Assembly, except that the Agency may cancel a municipal project upon the request or concurrence of the municipality provided that notice of the cancellation is included in the Agency's annual proposed Transportation Program.*