

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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**MARCH 19-23 MARKS
NATIONAL FLOOD SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK**

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC), NOAA’s National Weather Service (NWS), State Senator Thomas Libous (Dist. 52), Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (Dist. 126), Assemblyman Clifford Crouch (Dist. 107) and County Executive Barbara Fiala today marked the start of National Flood Safety Awareness Week, which runs through Friday, March 23. This 5-day designation is issued by NWS to coincide with the beginning of spring, which is the time of the year when the threat of flooding is generally the greatest – although flooding can occur any time of the year in the Susquehanna River Basin.

SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz said, “The Susquehanna basin is one of the nation’s most flood-prone areas, making flooding an ever-present danger. Last June’s devastating flood was a harsh reminder of that fact, particularly for the residents and businesses in eastern Southern Tier. Never before had this region witnessed flooding of that magnitude as the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers rose to record-setting levels.”

“It only takes a few inches of water to cost lives in a flood situation,” said Senator Libous. “We urge everyone in the Southern Tier to be safe and cautious this spring as the potential for flooding increases with every fraction of an inch of rain and every degree raised on the thermometer.”

Much of the focus of the NWS Flood Awareness Week campaign is internet-driven (<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/floodsafety>), allowing people to access a wide range of information related to flooding and flood safety programs, including safety tips, and information on flood insurance programs and how to flood proof homes. During each day of the week, a different program will be featured such as the NWS’ Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services and Turn Around Don’t Drown™ programs.

“No matter how much information there is on the dangers of flooding, it has limited value if people don’t know it exists,” said Dave Nicosia, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, NWS Binghamton. “Making people aware of the existing resources and where they can access it is an important step in the overall effort to help people understand the dangers posed by flooding.”

According to the NWS, more people die each year in the United States from flooding than any other severe-weather event, and more than half of those deaths are the result of people attempting to drive on flooded roadways. Residents living in or near flood-prone areas should be alert to flood warnings and have evacuation routes planned out in advance.

Assemblywoman Lupardo said, “It’s so important for people to understand that raging floodwaters are extremely dangerous, and even the largest vehicles are no match. Lives are tragically and needlessly lost

when people get a false sense of security in their vehicles. It only takes as little as 18 to 24 inches of water to sweep away vehicles, which can then trap and drown drivers and their passengers.”

More than 80 percent of the 1,400 plus municipalities in the Susquehanna basin include areas that are flood-prone. Since 1986, the Susquehanna Flood Forecasting and Warning System (SFFWS) has provided the data used by the NWS to issue accurate and timely flood watches and warnings to help save lives and reduce flood damages. The SFFWS is credited with reducing damages in the Susquehanna basin by an average of \$32 million each year.

“Many communities, emergency management officials and businesses rely on the Susquehanna flood warning system,” said Assemblyman Crouch. “We can’t control or prevent the times when Mother Nature wreaks havoc on us, but we can take preventative measures to ensure our safety, including maintaining the Susquehanna flood warning. For that reason, I have urged our congressional delegation to continue supporting adequate funding for the system.”

SRBC is supporting a \$2 million appropriation request for federal fiscal year 08. These federal funds are annually allocated to the NWS and the U.S. Geological Survey to maintain and operate the Susquehanna system. More information on the Susquehanna Flood Forecasting and Warning System is available on the web site at www.susquehannafloodforecasting.org.

“We have all learned a lot in these past two years about the devastation our rivers can cause, but it is still important to emphasize their potential not just during the spring months when the likelihood of flooding is at its highest but all year long,” said Broome County Executive Barbara J. Fiala. “We hope that in light of what this community has been through, our residents pay attention to important flood watches and warnings and also take the necessary precautions.”

SRBC is the governing agency established under a 100-year compact signed on December 24, 1970, by the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland to protect and wisely manage the water resources of the Susquehanna River Basin. The Susquehanna River starts in Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles to Havre de Grace, Md., where the river meets the Chesapeake Bay. The SRBC web site is www.srbc.net.

NWS provides weather, hydrologic and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas, for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national information database and infrastructure that can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public and the global community. The NWS Binghamton office web site is www.weather.gov.bgm.

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