

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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**SRBC URGES DRIVERS TO AVOID FLOODED
ROADWAYS, INVITES PUBLIC TO ATTEND
FLOOD FORECASTING & WARNING
CONFERENCE ON MAY 27**

Harrisburg, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) today issued a drivers' alert to caution vehicle operators not to drive through waters when confronted with flooded roadways. Tragically, on May 9 a York County woman and her child drowned while attempting to drive across a roadway submerged under 3-5 inches of flood waters. The dangers of driving through flooded roadways will be among the many topics of discussion at a May 27 conference on the Susquehanna River Basin Flood Forecasting and Warning System. The conference will be held at Millersville University, Lancaster County, Pa., from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and is sponsored by SRBC and the National Weather Service (NWS).

Flood waters are extremely fast flowing, forceful and unpredictable. It takes as little as six inches to make a vehicle buoyant. According to the NWS, half of all fatalities during floods are vehicle related.

The Flood Forecasting & Warning Conference is intended for people in the Lower Susquehanna Subbasin who respond to flood emergencies, disseminate information to the public and work in flood management. It is also for the general public, particularly those interested in learning more about flooding, how flood warnings are issued and how to avoid dangers during floods.

The conference will cover how the existing flood forecasting system works and its benefits basinwide, and include hands-on training to help people get the most out of internet forecast resources and products and raise awareness of the many helpful NWS programs. The conference agenda, registration materials and more information are available on SRBC's web site at www.srbc.net/flood_forecasting/workshop.htm

The Lower Subbasin includes all or portions of Dauphin, York, Lancaster, Northumberland, Perry, Centre, Union, Berks, Snyder, Schuylkill, Juniata, Lebanon, Cumberland, Franklin and Adams counties in Pennsylvania, and Carroll, Baltimore, Harford and Cecil counties in Maryland.

As late-spring and summer storms sweep through the Susquehanna River Basin, one of the nation's most flood-prone watersheds, SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz urges drivers, "not to drive on flooded roadways because they endanger not only their own

lives, but the lives of rescuers, who may be trained emergency personnel or well-meaning, but untrained citizens.”

The recent tragic deaths in York County follow on the heels of flood related deaths in 2003 in the Susquehanna basin. Six people lost their lives – all related to driving on flooded roadways. The following are highlights of flood events in 2003 involving vehicles.

June 13-14: Flash flood warnings were issued in York County, Pa., and Broome and Delaware Counties, N.Y. In York County, numerous homes were inundated with up to 7 feet of water, one bridge washed away and a second was damaged. In Broome County, five deaths occurred in the Town of Colesville when a car was swept away at night on a washed-out roadway.

June 18-21: In Lancaster County, significant flooding along the Conestoga River resulted in the loss of life when a motorist drove his car across a flooded bridge.

August 9-11: A widespread rain event affected most of the Susquehanna basin. Several locations reported 3 to 5 inches of rain over a 24-hour period. In Chemung County, N.Y., a state of emergency was issued for the towns of Southport and Pine City as many residents were forced to evacuate their homes. In Pennsylvania, more than 200 homes sustained water damage in Blair County. In Luzerne County, power outages caused pumping station failures in the Borough of West Wyoming, resulting in several road closures. The state Route 309 bridge in Kingston Township was washed out. In Northumberland County, several residents were rescued from their cars as they tried to cross flooded roadways.

September 23: More than 12 flood and flash flood warnings were issued as 1 to 5 inches of rain fell across the Lower Susquehanna Subbasin. In Lancaster County, Pa., more than 40 roads were closed and county emergency management personnel performed 14 water rescues. In York County, 20 homes were evacuated along the Conewago Creek. Several people were rescued from stranded cars on the flooded roadways in Dover, West Manchester and Washington Townships.

The Susquehanna River Basin is vulnerable to frequent, localized flash floods every year, which usually affect smaller tributaries and can occur with little warning. The river has also long experienced large-scale floods of devastating proportions. Native Americans first told of serious floods occurring about every 14 years along the river. Since the early 1800s, the main stem Susquehanna River has flooded on average once every 20 years.

SRBC is the governing agency established 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 Commission. The Susquehanna River starts in Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles to Havre de Grace, Md., where the river meets the Chesapeake Bay.

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