

STATE AGENCY AFTER ACTION REPORTS FOR THE 1997 DISASTERS

N.D. Office of the Attorney General



The Attorney General is the chief legal and law enforcement officer of the State of North Dakota. The Attorney General is responsible for protecting the rights of North Dakota, to defend the actions of state officials, and to ensure public order. In response to the flood in the Red River Valley, the Attorney General's Office initiated rapid actions to protect North Dakota citizens from fraudulent activities that frequently follow natural disasters and assist the local criminal justice agencies and fire service. Divisions of the Attorney General's Office, which directly participated in the flood response and recovery, include the State Fire Marshal, the Licensing Section of the Criminal Regulatory Division, Consumer Protection and Antitrust, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Gaming Division, the State and Local Government and Natural Resources and Indian Affairs Legal Divisions, and the Administration and Finance and Attorney General Administration.

The North Dakota Office of the Attorney General also undertook substantial efforts to establish the "One-Stop Shop" for transient merchant and contractor licensing. The purpose of this program was to streamline the state and city processes for transient merchants and contractors and to provide some protection to Grand Forks citizens from unscrupulous businesses through the use of criminal background checks. In conducting the minimal background checks, more than 20 arrests were made for outstanding warrants. Additionally, approximately 24 illegal aliens were identified and detained.

The establishment of the "One-Stop Shop" for transient merchant and contractor licensing involved the participation of more than eight federal, state and local agencies. Cooperation among agencies that established the Shop was exemplary. Working closely with those agencies, the legal divisions of the Attorney General's Office were able to identify issues which could be addressed through legal agreements and assistance. Having legal staff on hand with a working knowledge of how the operation was progressing also allowed for timely responses and advice.

The Hammer Award was presented by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on behalf of Vice President Al Gore to the employees of JSND, the N.D. office of Attorney General, N.D. Secretary of State's office, and the N.D. Workers Compensation Bureau. The Hammer Award was instituted by Vice President Gore to recognize teams of federal employees and their partners whose efforts resulted in a government that works better and costs less.

Bank of North Dakota



The Bank of North Dakota (BND) serves as the state's economic development bank and is the only state owned bank in the United States. Its service, in response to the recovery from the 1997 disasters, was focused on disaster relief assistance that could best ensure economic stability. In doing so, the BND established a lines of credit in the amounts of \$15 million line of credit to the N.D. Division of Emergency Management (NDDEM); \$10 million to the Adjutant General of the N.D. National Guard (NDNG); \$25 million to the city of Grand Forks; \$12 million to the University of North Dakota (UND); and \$7 million to raise the dike in Devils Lake. This was the first time in the bank's 78 year history a line of credit was established for a community and school systems. Lines of credit were established to meet cash flow needs pending federal disaster assistance.

The Disaster Relief Loan Program was established to assist the Grand Forks area with \$5 million assisting other areas affected by the spring flooding. These funds were matched by local financial institutions making more than \$70 million pool available. The coordination of the '97 Flood Relief Fund was coordinated with the N.D. Community Foundation with BND serving as the central deposit base. BND staff also provided clerical support for the UND Financial Aid office and also copied loan documents for local bankers whose loan files were destroyed by flood waters. An employee flood donation drive raised funds and material supplies of \$2,826.

The forbearance of student loans was coordinated with the U.S. Department of Education while also working closely with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA) to establish loan forbearance and a federal-state housing assistance application center. BND also reduced the rate for the existing Family Farm and Farm Operating programs allowing low interest loans to restructure debt and repay operating losses caused by the wet conditions.

For each of the loan purposes described above, BND received cheaper funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank to fund these loan programs so that BND could pass on attractive interest rates to the borrowers.

In 2005, BND also responded to homeowners who were affected by sporadic flooding caused by heavy rainfall. BND provided loans up to \$12,000 at 5% fixed for 10 years in a second mortgage position.

Economic Development and Finance



To help the business community recover from the flood, Economic Development and Finance, along with other partners in the "One Stop Capital Center" met with local lenders, developers and primary sector business owners to find out where help was needed and where there were financial gaps. From these meetings, it was determined the needed assistance was in short term working capital. In responding to this need, the Development Fund and Technology Transfer, Inc. boards restructured existing loans and delayed principal/interest payments. The Development Fund also established a \$2 million disaster recovery fund to help businesses recover financially.

Economic Development and Finance hired Flour Daniel Consulting Firm to provide a basis for planning the states economic future. The consultants met with local lenders in Devils Lake and Grand Forks to develop recovery strategies and recommend possible adjustments to existing economic development strategies. Further, Economic Development and Finance committed \$9,000 to match federal funding to help the Procurement Assistance Center work with North Dakota companies to receive federal contracts for work or services and it has paid per diem expenses for Small Business Development Center (SBDC) consultants to come to North Dakota to help local businesses recover from the flood.

Job Service North Dakota



The evacuation of Grand Forks meant the closing of nearly all Grand Forks businesses, which represented 34,013 wage and salary jobs. It was estimated as many as 15,000 workers would file claims for unemployment insurance as a result of the flood. As of August 15, 1997, 12,162 claims were filed; the majority in the first two weeks following the evacuation.

The Grand Forks JSND office was not flooded, and as a result, they were one of the first agencies to be reestablished. Cleanup workers and reconstruction workers were in high demand, and up to 1,800 job openings were listed in the first week after the flood. Nevertheless, there were many people without jobs who applied for unemployment insurance and continued to seek for work. More than 500 people had been employed in various occupations. The Disaster Assistance Program (DAP) has assisted in finding work for many people and it has provided thousands of labor hours towards the cleanup and restoration of the community.

To provide services to the unprecedented number of people coming into Job Service North Dakota (JSND) offices across the state, staff in local offices worked extended hours and weekends. Offices in Grafton and Fargo experienced the greatest number of new claimants, and staff from Grand Forks, Williston, Dickinson, and Jamestown volunteered to work in those offices. Staff from the Department of Labor regional office in Denver, and employees from the Colorado state unemployment insurance division volunteered to work in the central office to help take and process claims.

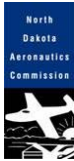
The JSND office in Grand Forks served as the headquarters for the "One-Stop Shop" licensing center for transient merchants and contractors. The One-Stop Shop facilitated the licensing of reputable contractors, minimized the chance that unscrupulous individuals would take advantage of local residents, assist in the collection of federal and state taxes and assist and educate Grand Forks citizens regarding consumer protection issues and tax laws during the 1997 flood recovery. In addition, a central location, phone number, contact person, and crisis management team were established within the agency to coordinate the need for help with available staff, to facilitate accurate communications, and provide a source for problem solving throughout the agency.

Three consumer hotlines were established; the Commuter Express Hotline was used by members of the workforce to assess the transportation needs of the area, the Work Force Hotline was marketed statewide to individuals seeking work in Grand Forks, and the Contractor Hotline was developed for home/apartment owners to connect with contractors available to provide services. All of the hotlines were housed and staffed by Job Service personnel.

During the 1997 Flood, Cass County put together a disaster Community Response Team for Cass/ Clay and Fargo / Moorhead. The Disaster Emergency team consisted of several government agencies and social service providers to assist in the recovery. An Employee Emergency Phone Line was incorporated and have recently started using for information in case of emergency/weather situations.

Recovery from a flood disaster of the magnitude of the one in Grand Forks requires extraordinary efforts. Job Service Rapid Response services provided disaster assistance in the form of over seven million dollars in a National Disaster Assistance Program Grant and the Grand Forks Youth Disaster Marshall Plan. These programs put over 800 displaced workers and youth to work in our community in clean-up and restoration activities in public buildings, parks, and schools. Many youth worked in the emergency child care center, which allowed workers to get back on the job sooner and to begin the process of cleaning and restoring their homes and businesses.

N.D. Aeronautics Commission



During the winter and spring disasters of 1997, the N.D. Aeronautics Commission (NDAero) provided air transportation for state agency personnel. The NDAero was most often required to respond on short notice; therefore, it was necessary for the commission to stay updated on the weather reports and airport conditions. In the future, the NDAero would like to see airports/air transportation utilized more in the overall disaster emergency plan because many times travel by air is the only transportation available.

N.D. Association of Counties



As a stable grass roots form of government, volunteer counties provide numerous services, which establish the framework that help society to function. The disaster conditions of 1997 caused counties to stretch their budgets even further to meet the demands of these extreme conditions. The disasters had the largest impact on three integral county service areas: rural transportation, social services, and public safety. It is in these areas that counties experience the greatest costs and management difficulties in times of disasters. Although federal and state assistance helps cover a certain percentage of the initial cost impacts, counties are responsible to cover remaining costs using their own resources with property taxing authority virtually frozen at current levels.

The N.D. Association of Counties (NDAoC) developed two programs to directly help the counties affected by flooding. The Counties Helping Counties program was a way for counties in need of goods or services to get in contact with other counties who could provide services. The other program, the County Employee Relief Fund, was designed to allow county employees to make tax-deductible monetary donations directly to flood-affected county employees.

Based on survey data from 30 counties, it has been projected that total response costs were approximately \$11 million and recovery costs will be in excess of \$18.7 million. These figures, however, do not include any major facility reconstruction or demolition costs.

N.D. Department of Agriculture



Agriculture, North Dakota's number one industry, has suffered the largest blow of any sector of the state's economy at the hands of Mother Nature during the winter and spring of 1996-97. More than 123,000 head of cattle perished, over five million pounds of milk were destroyed, and close to one million acres of prime farmland were left unplanted as a result of the winter storms and spring flooding that ravaged the State.

Farmers and ranchers not only experienced livestock and crop production losses, but suffered damage to farm buildings, machinery, and stored crops. Direct losses to farmers and ranchers totaled more than \$250 million, with estimated additional indirect losses expected to reach over \$600 million.

The N.D. Department of Agriculture (NDAg) took quick and decisive action to help North Dakota farmers and ranchers during these disastrous and difficult times. As the disaster progressed, the NDAg activated the Agriculture Snow Emergency Task Force and began to take action to coordinate agricultural assistance efforts. Some of the other programs that were utilized include the Animal Carcass Disposal Program, the Help Your Farm Neighbor Relief Fund, the Cattlemen Coping with Winter mailing, the Pesticide Fertilizer and Agricultural Chemical Clean-up, the Oklahoma and Iowa Fence Post and Fencing Materials Donation, the Livestock Indemnity Program Documentation, the North Dakota Agricultural Mediation Service, the Rural Survival Task Force, the Disaster Assistance Web Page, the Adopt-A-Farm Family Program, and the establishment of the Agriculture Disaster Response Center.

Coordinating and establishing these services helped to ensure unified and direction action on the part of agencies and organizations directly responsible for providing assistance to farmers and ranchers. It also helped clarify and communicate the roles of various U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and other federal programs, which provided assistance to farmers and ranchers.

N.D. Department of Banking and Financial Institutions

The impact to North Dakota financial institutions due to the spring blizzard was statewide. Nearly all financial institutions in the city of Grand Forks were either national banks, federal savings and loan associations, or federal credit unions, which the N.D. Department of Banking and Financial Institutions does not supervise. There are three small state-chartered unions, however, located in Grand Forks.

In response to the flood, the N.D. Banking and Financial Institutions generated and continued to maintain a listing showing the status for returning financial services to customers due to financial institutions' main offices and facilities being disrupted by the flooding or evacuation orders. This information was sent to all financial institutions in the Ninth Federal Reserve District, the American Red Cross, and was to be available to others making inquiry. The listing also includes telephone numbers or special "hotlines" that have been established for customer use.

N.D. Banking and Financial Institutions *(continued)*

The NDBFI examiners were instructed to encourage lenders to work with borrowers by deferring loan payments and crafting loan terms and agreements to accommodate borrowers' situations. Further, examiners were asked to use leniency in assessing loan collateral margins for borrowers impacted by the flood.

N.D. Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

When the National Weather Service (NWS) declared that the Red River would crest in Grand Forks at 49 feet, many volunteers helped sandbag, in order to make the existing dikes high enough to handle the predicted crest. By March, the Grand Forks Community Service/Restitution Program (GFCSR), the Wahpeton District Parole/Probation Office, and the RESTORE program in Fargo, began referring court-ordered community service clients and parole/probation offenders to help in the sandbagging efforts. In total, 55 persons completed approximately 4,443 hours of community service toward the sandbagging and flood fighting effort.

After the city of Grand Forks was evacuated, 51 inmates at the Grand Forks Correctional Center were relocated to other correctional facilities. At the State Penitentiary, off duty staff assisted with processing and setting up housing for some of the displaced inmates. Inmates were temporarily housed in the infirmary, orientation unit, women's unit, and a unit in the women's gymnasium. Cots were borrowed from the NDNG and mattresses were brought up from the Missouri River Correctional Center. Other jails in the area agreed to accept 21 of the inmates and additional inmates were released by court order on April 24 and 25.

In an effort to make contact with parole and probation clients, the Grand Forks adult parole/probation office re-routed all calls to the Grand Forks Office to the Bismarck Central Office. In addition, a temporary office was sent up in Larimore, North Dakota, and was placed in the Grand Forks Herald, requesting all parole/probation offenders assigned to the Grand Forks Office to contact the Larimore Office, local radio stations announced that all parole/probation offenders were to contact the Larimore Office, officers performed home checks for criminal offenders, and officers used answering machines in their residences for offender check ins. By July 1, 1997, nearly all of the criminal offenders assigned to the Grand Forks adult parole and probation office were accounted for. Bench warrants have been issued for those offenders who are still unaccounted for.

N.D. Department of Health



The N.D. Department of Health (NDDoH) plays an integral role in protecting the health of North Dakotans. When flooding began in Grand Forks, NDDoH staff members responded to immediate public health needs such as maintaining sanitary living conditions, relocating nursing home residents who were forced out of their homes during the emergency evacuation, and restoring the city's drinking water system. The State Health Officer assisted the medical community with evacuation of the medical part complex, provided on-site support to community and public health officials and worked with community, state, and federal agencies to coordinate emergency and primary health care services.

Many divisions of the NDDoH were active in preparation, response and recovery efforts before the flooding occurred. In early spring, the Division of Microbiology requested funding to purchase larvicide in anticipation of increased mosquito counts due to flooding. Employees in the health department's Division of Disease Control worked with local public health departments to encourage tetanus immunizations among potential flood victims. The Preventative Health Section declared that dead cattle in waterways constituted a public health threat, and FEMA funding was made available for cattle removal. Thereafter, the Division of Water Quality assisted in the removal and farm-site burial of 954 cattle that had frozen to death in the state's streams, rivers, and lakes. This division also assisted in the burial of an additional 13,768 cattle to avoid potential health hazards.

After the flooding, NDDoH staff members worked with FEMA and the Grand Forks Public Health Department to prepare 25,000 cleanup kits that would supplement supplies donated through the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. In addition, nearly every division of the department was instrumental in flood recovery efforts. For instance, the Division of Waste Management worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to develop a plan for debris removal in Grand Forks and assisted the EPA in establishing a household hazardous waste collection and disposal program. The Division of Environmental Engineering was active in coordinating with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to advise contractors about proper respiratory precautions during clean-up activities, providing oversight inspections of contractors to ensure worker safety, and inspecting asbestos removal work sites to ensure worker safety and compliance with asbestos regulations.

N.D. Department of Human Services



The State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) assigns functional coordination of individual and family assistance to the N.D. Department of Human Services (NDDHS). The purpose is to provide emergency or disaster victims with services necessary to meet basic and special human needs.

N.D. Department of Human Services (continued)

NDDHS is an umbrella agency that provides human services in the areas of aging, mental health, addiction, child protection, public assistance, Medicaid, child support enforcement and energy assistance. The Department administers its programs through eight regional human service centers, the Developmental Center, a residential facility for persons with developmental disabilities and the N.D. State Hospital. Economic Assistance programs are state supervised and county administered.

During the response phase of the flood, the NDDHS coordinated with the American Red Cross, the N.D. Department of Health NDDoH, and the N.D. Long-Term Care Association to relocate vulnerable children and adults who had been receiving care from nursing homes, basic care facilities, and home and community based programs. Additionally, the NDDHS applied for and received a federal waiver which simplified the process for Medicaid recipients to access medical services. Further, the NDDHS provided technical infrastructure and technical assistance to the Grand Forks County Social Services office so it could offer displaced Grand Forks county residents Food Stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid and other necessities.

Information from other states that have had similar disasters indicates North Dakota should expect increased caseloads related to child and elder abuse and neglect, alcohol, and drug abuse, mental health issues, and increasing severity of mental illness. Therefore, the NDDHS has funded a staff of 192 to provide crisis counseling, provided funding to locate vulnerable elderly, earmarked an additional \$200,000 for the rebuilding of the Child Care System in Grand Forks, and acts as a focal point for state-wide information and referral for special need social service issues.


N.D. Department of Public Instruction

After Grand Forks was evacuated, the N.D. Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) immediately requested that all North Dakota school districts accept flood displaced children as resident students for the balance of the 96-97 school term and assured school districts that they would receive foundation aid for flood displaced students enrolled at their schools. The Department also made an agreement with education officials in Minnesota and South Dakota to admit flood displaced students to their schools regardless of their state of residence.

NDDPI's food distribution office worked to arrange delivery and allocation of commodity foods that were donated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This food was distributed to the American Red Cross and Salvation Army, which together provided more than 1.3 million meals during the duration of the flooding disaster.

The Department received a waiver from the USDA on the application process for children applying for free meal benefits. As a result, all flood-displaced children were allowed to receive free breakfasts and lunches at host schools for the duration of the 1996-1997 school year without the need to submit an application. This resulted in about 2,600 children receiving 2,621 free breakfasts and 40,567 free lunches in April and May of 1997.

N.D. Department of Transportation

 During the winter of 1997, the N.D. Department of Transportation (NDDOT) counted nine major storms that closed down the Interstate highway system. This count included a total of 12 separate closings on either I-29 or I-94. As a result of the heavy snowfalls, the NDDOT had all 18 of its snow blowers and 13 seven ton V-plows working in the eastern half of the state, and 320 snow plows were used across the state. Nevertheless, because of the significant amount of snow, the NDDOT received additional assistance with snow removal. NDDOT borrowed two snow blowers from the Montana DOT, seven U.S. Air Force snow blowers, two N.D. Air National Guard snow blowers, 30 NDNG dozers, and hired contractors. In total, approximately 1,600 pieces of equipment and 450 employees were used for snow removal during the peak of the disaster.

In January alone, the NDDOT spent \$2,746,866 on snow removal. After the three-day blizzard in April, \$259,587 was spent on snow removal. The total for the entire winter was \$5,738,335. During a normal year, snow removal expenses are about \$2.2 million. Eligible costs for the disaster was \$3,741,150 with a total reimbursement from FEMA of \$2,805,863.

Since the winter of 1996/1997 the NDDOT has developed a Living Snow Fence program to help mitigate where snow accumulates on North Dakota's highways. The snow fences are also an effort to keep highways from becoming blocked and to provide safe roads for the traveling public. NDDOT strategically placed 20 dynamic electric message signs along I-94 and I-29 to provide advanced warning to motorists for winter time road closures and emergency travel information.

The NDDOT has since purchased a mobile generator, located in the Fargo District. This generator is able to be moved to other locations and can provide back up power in case of a power outage. A Low Ground Pressure dozer was also purchased and is very effective in moving large piles of snow. NDDOT has contracting with a private weather forecasting company that uses state of the art weather forecasting technology. This enables NDDOT to better prepare for extreme weather conditions.

N.D. Department of Transportation *(continued)*

Due to new technology since 1996/1997 the NDDOT has significantly increased its road reporting. Five daily road reports have been replaced with eight or more daily reports. The frequency of updated reports can change with the changes in weather conditions. The information is available on the NDDOT Web site and is also fed to the 511 system.

In February of 2003, the NDDOT implemented the 511 Travel Information System. This system gives travelers immediate weather and road information via telephone or through any Internet connection to any segment of state owned roads in North Dakota.

N.D. Forest Service



North Dakota experienced excessive spring flooding in 1997. Trees were inundated with water for prolonged periods of time, damaged by large ice flows, or destroyed during emergency dike building operations. Native forest areas were also negatively affected by the seasonal flooding. Devils Lake reached a record level of 1,442.22 feet above sea level on June 18, 1997, which flooded an additional 200,000 trees. Since 1993, the lake has inundated more than 900,000 trees.

In the Red River Valley, it is estimated that 5,000 community trees, valued at over \$525,000, were damaged or destroyed. Most of the trees destroyed during the flood were less than three inches in diameter and planted within the last five years in parks, subdivisions, and city nurseries along river corridors. The heaviest losses were from mechanical damage caused by large sheets of ice or flood debris shearing off young trees and from emergency dike building efforts within and adjacent to the planted trees.

In Devils Lake, submerged trees and floating debris from dead trees are threatening boaters and other water-based recreation users on the lake. The loss of trees along the water's edge will also have a negative ecological impact on the lake. Woodlands in riparian areas are important because trees stabilize soils, provide critical wildlife habitat and act as filters for pollution prevention. In an effort to replace the forestry in flood damaged communities, the N.D. Community Forestry Council, which is responsible for advising the State Forester on the administration of the state community forestry program, has decided to give priority to flood communities in the grant application process for America the Beautiful (ATB) and Community Transportation Enhancement (CTE) grant programs.

In large flood damaged communities, "green spaces" will be developed along the river corridor. The concept is to reestablish the natural floodplain that existed prior to the communities development. Homes within this area will be removed, and native vegetation resistant to flood damage will be established. The N.D. Forest Service will play an integral role in reestablishing these by providing financial and technical assistance.

N.D. Game and Fish



The N.D. Game and Fish Department (NDGF) is responsible for managing the fish and wildlife resources and habitats and activities that affect those resources. In addition, NDGF has regulatory oversight and enforcement of water safety regulations. The Law Enforcement Division of NDGF has eight qualified, trained and equipped divers who perform rescue and recovery missions, underwater investigation and numerous underwater environmental monitoring activities.

During the 1997 spring flood, NDGF assisted in the evacuation and security in and around Grand Forks. For five days immediately after the Red River overflowed its banks, eleven field wardens and one supervisor conducted several missions, using department boats and aircraft in the Grand Forks area. These missions included assisting the evacuation of governmental offices, assisting individual citizens with evacuation, conducting night surveillance in flooded areas using NDGF boats, escorting VIPs into the flooded areas by boat, and performing aerial surveillance to prevent looting.

N.D. Geological Survey



The N.D. Geological Survey (NDGS) has been studying floods in the Red River Valley since 1965. These studies involve documenting past flood events as well as predicting areas of inundation at various water levels. In addition, NDGS has been involved in several studies of the Devils Lake area over the last 100 years.

Since the flood, NDGS has been monitoring the extent of the inundation from the 1997 Red River Valley floods and comparing the areal extent of the flood to earlier predictions. In addition, NDGS has provided technical information to federal, state and local government agencies to examine the feasibility of building either a diversion tunnel or new system of dikes.

The NDGS assigned all of the flood control monitoring and response related duties to one geologist. Prior to that time, duties and responsibilities were shared by several staff members. This reassignment/realignment insures a uniform response to flood issues within our agency. In addition, we are currently mapping the surface geology of urban areas within the Red River Valley at a scale of 1:24,000. So far, portions of Grand Forks and Fargo have been completed.

N.D. Highway Patrol



The N.D. Highway Patrol (NDHP) is the functional coordinator for public safety. NDHP is responsible for coordinating statewide law enforcement for the purpose of ensuring a safe environment for the citizens of North Dakota during emergency or disaster situations. In response to the flood, NDHP utilized its Emergency Mobilization Plan and activated the Tactical Response Unit. In addition, other NDHP personnel staffed the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) which coordinates law enforcement and security operations for the area. In coordination with the NDDOT, the NDHP assisted in road closures, detour routes, traffic control, and escorts in the flood affected areas. In an effort to help its own personnel, the NDHP established the "Cops Helping Cops" program, which allowed police officers from throughout the country to donate funds to assist officers who had suffered losses from the flood.

N.D. Housing Finance Agency



The N.D. Housing Finance Agency's (NDHFA) initial response to the flood disaster was to assist flood evacuees in locating temporary housing by obtaining waivers from U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to permit vacant units in HUD Section 8 and Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects to be utilized by evacuees without regard to the normal tenancy restrictions. Currently, the NDHFA continues to help flood victims with recovery, repair, and mitigation.

In assessing the impact of the flooding on NDHFA programs and participants, the NDHFA sent letters to 580 Grand Forks first-time homeowners regarding forbearance of their May home loan payment. NDHFA also sent out a home-owners questionnaire regarding property damage assessment, the status of coverage and the employment status of homeowners. In addition, besides extending the deadlines for several of NDHFA's programs, the NDHFA created an interest rate reduction program, the Disaster Recovery Buydown Program, which is available to households which have experienced a flood-related involuntary relocation and those which have sustained more than 50 percent damage to their principal residence.

N.D. Insurance Department



The N.D. Insurance Department took quick and decisive action to help Grand Forks residents impacted by the flood of 1997. During the initial weekend of the flood, the Department added a 24-hour voice mail messaging system to the Department's 800 number, revised internal staff functions to add staffing to the hotlines, created a resource file for staff to use in assisting consumers, issued a bulletin to all insurance companies with insureds in the Red River Valley requesting that they institute a policy deferring premium payments for consumers for a period of 60 days, and issued a press release regarding the use of public adjusters in the state.

Additionally, the Insurance Department participated with private interest groups and state agencies in developing and presenting a training program and videos to brief attorneys on issues and problems relative to the flood disaster. To provide direct access to consumers, the Department co-located an office in Fargo with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and a branch office in Grand Forks, when the residents were able to return to their homes. Finally, the Insurance Department, in conjunction with the Institute for Property Loss Reduction and the FEMA, co-sponsored a "flood insurance summit", which sought ways to enhance the flood insurance program and sales of flood insurance.

As an appendix to the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP), the department has developed a database (list) of catastrophe contacts for every insurance company licensed to do business in this state. This would be available to Department staff to use to assist consumers, and to the liaison to use in working with the SEOC in the event of a catastrophic event similar to the 1997 flooding. The Department identified and trained a senior staff member to act as a liaison with the SEOC, and to coordinate with other agencies as needed for on-site state agency consumer response centers.

Consumer information has been included in department brochures on homeowners insurance and on the department website with links to FEMA and NFIP. Annual early spring news releases are issued reminding consumers to review homeowners' policies and to give special attention to the risk of flood and the 30-day waiting period for coverage to take effect. In addition, the department works directly with FEMA to promote the proper training of property and casualty agents who will write Flood Insurance either directly or through the Write Your Own program.

N.D. Insurance Reserve Fund



The Claims Department of the N.D. Insurance Reserve Fund (NDIRF) has kept track of 'flood-related' claims as a separate group with \$400,000 in losses. These flood-related losses are primarily auto physical damage and inland marine (portable equipment such as lawn mowers, tractors, computers, etc...) claims. Claim losses experienced by NDIRF due to blizzard conditions are not tracked by any specific weather-related descriptor.

N.D. League of Cities



On April 26, 1997, one week into the flood disaster in the Red River Valley, Governor Schafer asked the N.D. League of Cities (NDLC) to take the leadership role in managing donations of goods and services for flood relief. Governor Schafer asked the League to establish an “effective, efficient system to collect, manage and distribute the truckloads of goods coming into the state.” To that end, the League secured a State Reception Center to warehouse the donated goods for distribution to all cities included in the presidential disaster declaration. The donated labor that was offered was inventoried the information was then provided to the local agencies that are coordinating volunteer crews. A computer registry system was developed to inventory all offers of donated goods that were called into the Donations Hotline nationwide. A special site was established on NDLC’s home page to view flood photos, send e-mail, or register an offer of donated goods or services. By late summer, the League staff and volunteers were able to transition responsibilities to staff and volunteers at the local level in Grand Forks. The donations management efforts of the N.D. League of Cities has served as a national model.

SUCSESSES

The Seventh Day Adventist Church members and the United Methodist Church members who volunteered countless hours were the saving grace of the hotline. The creation (by a student volunteer) and refinement of a donations registry made tracking and identifying donations much easier for the volunteers. The donations registry software has been sent on disk to nearly a dozen states.

FEMA personnel who accomplished the early work of volunteer training, establishing data processing for the incoming donations, and securing needed equipment were essential in the disaster response. Outstanding assistance in moving the warehouse inventory out of the hangars and into the city’s public works building was provided by the NDNG’s quartermaster unit. The soldiers not only moved the goods quickly, they completed an inventory (something that had been difficult to accomplish because of volume). This inventory was computerized (another program developed by our student volunteer) and processing the goods became much easier.

Many businesses across North Dakota sent employees to assist the valley communities, but particularly noteworthy program was initiated by the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce. A worker registration form was faxed to the 1,000 plus Chamber-member businesses, asking employers to give people time off to volunteer. The Chamber took out several full page ads and many people responded. Offers to donate services were delivered to and then provided to the United Way in Fargo and Grand Forks for follow-up.

LESSONS LEARNED

While the donations registry software was helpful, it is not Internet-based. If the donations management system is run out of Bismarck, the people in the impact area cannot use the same database to enter their information. **Upgrade:** Convert the resource registry to an Internet site that, with passwords, can be accessed from any EOC.

Warehouse space is at a premium in this state and locating it during a disaster robs valuable time. The N.D. Economic Development & Finance Department maintains a list of available warehouse space over 20,000 square feet, but we didn’t find that out until several weeks into the disaster. **Upgrade:** Encourage communities to maintain a list of possible storage space in their EOP. Task ED&F with keeping their list current.

The lack of secure warehouse space caused problems for the duration of the operation as unauthorized personnel had access to the goods at all hours of day and night. Items promised to a distribution center the next morning sometimes disappeared overnight. **Upgrade:** An armed guard is unnecessary, but controlled access is helpful in providing service to distribution centers.

A related issue is the need for documentation in the warehouse operation. In a number of instances, we had businesses calling back for documentation of their donation for tax purposes. With different groups involving themselves in warehouse management, some records were lost in the shuffle. **Upgrade:** Contract with experienced warehouse managers and provide whatever is needed for them to do their job without interference.

Because the warehouse was run by an agency that relied on volunteers, there were several changes in management (about every two weeks). There was insufficient overlap between managers to have proper warehouse operation and distribution process orientation. **Upgrade:** The state’s donations manager should be involved in the orientation process each time to ensure a smooth transition.

The duties of Donations Coordinator were assigned a week into the disaster response. Because the management plan was incomplete and untested, much time was lost in attempts to quickly construct a system. There was considerable uncertainty about available resources and sources of assistance with donations management. **Upgrades:** The state needs to identify options for performance of this function well in advance of the next disaster. These duties should not be assigned to agencies that will likely have to place higher priority on meeting other crucial needs.

The job description should be refined in light of lessons learned. Clarify the resources that will be available to the Coordinator,

including sources of assistance. The Donations Manager's position description was developed and an employee hired several weeks into the disaster. Catching up was difficult. **Upgrade:** Refine the job description and provide training in donations management.

It was frequently unclear which distribution sites were in operation. Communication between the warehouse, voluntary agencies and distribution sites was non-existent in the beginning and inventory control was difficult. **Upgrade:** Work with the state VOAD to strengthen relationships before the next disaster.

When visiting communities like Grand Forks, considerable time was spent phoning the school districts, nursing homes, aging services, the hospital, etc. Often, they were not aware they could access the warehouse inventory. Fax information was provided to county, city and tribal governments across the state, but the information wasn't always relayed to people. **Upgrade:** Encourage city and county emergency managers to design and test a simple community response committee that includes a system for information-sharing. (Fargo and Cass County used a good model.)

NDDEM made funds available to pay room and board for a volunteer from ACS who processed the inventory data and entered all invoice information into the warehouse computer. The resulting list was provided to relief agencies which were then able to check the needs of their clients in relation to what was available. But for the ability to pay this person's expenses, we would not have had such a useful tool. **Upgrade:** Identify (limited) funds to pay expenses when volunteer help cannot be secured.

Remote warehousing (Casselton site) presented management, transportation and equipment challenges. However, for the goods that could not be distributed early in the recovery process (e.g., large appliances and building materials), other storage was important. **Upgrade:** Identify warehouse alternatives that include security and out-of-the-way space.

Insufficient or incorrect information (e.g., incorrect phone numbers or misspelled business name) negated some offers. Sometimes, we were unable to properly thank people. **Upgrade:** Ensure that all phone volunteers are thoroughly trained and have a clear understanding of the importance of accurate information.

Some items that were sent to disaster survivors were unusable. Goods were improperly packed and were destroyed in shipping. Some liquids arrived without labels and had to be treated as potentially hazardous. Some items were just plain junk. **Upgrade:** Our state needs to add its voice to the many who struggle to celebrate the generosity of people while educating them about the importance of donations that fit. A consistent message across the country is important.

The media did not always demonstrate an understanding of the donations management system and the need to be cautious in the activities they encouraged. A number of organized events would have benefited from sound planning and proper media attention. Many dripping bottles of shampoo mixed with groceries and household supplies packed in grocery store plastic bags could have been avoided. **Upgrade:** Work with the electronic and print media to educate within the industry and focus their public education efforts. The need for cash donations must receive particular emphasis.

There were many donations of valuable items, some of which would be eligible for distribution under the Individual and Family Grant (IFG) program (large appliances and basic furniture, for example). While we tried to ensure there was no duplication of benefits by working through the agencies, there may have been some duplication. **Upgrade:** Design a simple system of storage and distribution that works in concert with IFG.

The "care and feeding of volunteers" was a particularly important responsibility but time constraints made it difficult to do a good job. Because of the need to build the management system from scratch, time was not available for relationship building. Simple communication was difficult. **Upgrade:** Strengthen relationships when there are no disasters to build a system that works when it needs to be in place. Periodically debrief volunteers for their suggestions for improvements.

The importance of gratitude cannot be over emphasized. If for no other reason than to keep the donations "pipeline" open for the next disaster, it is important to say "thanks." Without good records of shipments received, it was impossible to backtrack and document corporate contributions. Periodic chaos in the warehouse operation, particularly when there was more than one group directing traffic, prevented some of the documentation. **Upgrade:** Warehouse managers need to secure the bills of lading and properly maintain files.

Relationship with local leadership is important. Although we did not encounter problems with city hall, there were not enough hours in the day to accomplish what needed to be done and maintain a flow of information. **Upgrade:** Having a tested mechanism for communication is essential. Local leaders need to be familiar with the donations management system and they need to know who to contact with questions.

"Say 'no' early and often" was the advice of an experienced donations manager. We didn't, at first. We were sorry later. **Upgrade:** Just do it!

1. The number one lesson learned: During a disaster is no time to develop a plan.

N.D. National Guard



The N.D. National Guard (NDNG) provided assistance to several other state and federal agencies to include: N.D. Department of Transportation (NDDOT), N.D. Highway Patrol (NDHP), N.D. Veterans Administration (VA), N.D. Department of Agriculture (NDAg), N.D. State Water Commission (SWC), N.D. Division of Emergency Management (NDDEM), N.D. State Fire Marshal, N.D. Parks and Recreation (NDPR), FEMA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Customs, and the American Red Cross.

Some of the missions and tasks the NDNG performed included: providing equipment and personnel to support aerial ice dusting, sandbagging, power generation, transportation of materials, dike patrols, traffic control, area security, ground and aerial evacuation, dike construction and repair, temporary shelter, temporary feeding, aerial fire suppression, water purification and distribution, aerial reconnaissance, recovery of livestock carcasses from waterways and the burial of these carcasses. The NDNG constructed a sandbag machine to support flood operations. The machine was transported to the requesting agency and supported with a forklift and operators.

The NDNG also launched two successful operations; Operation Good Neighbor and Operation Snowball.

OPERATION GOOD NEIGHBOR

The Governor of North Dakota authorized the use of NDNG resources to provide emergency assistance as a result of a severe spring blizzard and flooding in April 1997.

Individuals were placed on active duty based on the requests from the counties and task requirements. The 131st Quartermaster Detachment (Water Purification), the 132nd Quartermaster Company (Water Supply) and the 134th Quartermaster Detachment (Water Distribution) were the only units placed on state active duty as complete units to support potable water requirements in Grand Forks, ND. Operations centers were established by the Army National Guard in Bismarck and by the N.D. Air National Guard in Fargo.

A total of 1,886 Soldiers and Airmen have been placed on state active duty to support Operation Good Neighbor. This breaks down to 1,469 (78%) NDNG and 417 (22%) N.D. Air National Guard members. Operation Good Neighbor was the largest state activation of NDNG members in the history of the state. The highest number of members on state active duty was at 945 on April 19, 1997. Cumulative man-days had reached 22189 (18,136 for Army and 4,053 for Air).

The NDNG conducted operations in 35 of the 53 counties in North Dakota. The NDNG received assistance from the South Dakota National Guard. The Army, Air Force, and Navy Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer's (EPLO's) were activated to assist with military support operations. They coordinated assistance from the Grand Forks Air Force Base, U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve.



OPERATION SNOWBALL

On January 12, 1997; the President declared a major disaster to exist in the State of North Dakota as a result of damages caused by severe winter storms and blizzard conditions on January 11-12, 1997. The Governor of North Dakota authorized the use of NDNG resources to provide emergency response and recovery assistance to state and local governments as a result of the severe conditions.

The NDNG established operations in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) on January 13, 1997 to support the state's coordination efforts of the N.D. Division of Emergency Management (NDDEM) during Operation Snowball.

A total of 510 Soldiers and Airmen were placed on state active duty to support Operation Snowball. Cumulative man-days reached 5,520 (5,157 for Army and 363 for Air). Operation Snowball was the largest state activation of NDNG members in the history of the state. The highest number of cumulative members on state active duty was 196 on January 19, 1997.

The primary support mission of the NDNG was to provide equipment and operators to clear snow from public areas to provide emergency access. The NDNG employed full tracked dozers, rotary snow blowers, graders, front end loaders and dump trucks as primary equipment support. Only minor accidents and injuries were experienced by members of the NDNG while every piece of equipment deployed was well maintained prior to, during and after operations.

N.D. Office of Management and Budget



In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is composed of Fiscal Management, Information Services, Central Personnel, Central Services, Office of Intergovernmental Assistance, Facility Management, Risk Management, and State Radio.

The Fiscal Management Division of OMB serves as the central professional fiscal office of the executive branch which is responsible for statewide accounting, payroll, financial reporting, and budgeting. After the flood, Fiscal Management established special revenue and expenditure codes on the Statewide Accounting Management Information System so all expenditures related to the flood could be tracked and all revenues accounted for. In addition, Fiscal Management produced a revenue forecast to assess the impact on sales and income tax, agriculture, real estate, construction, employment, and income for the remainder of the 1995-97 biennium and for the 1997-99 biennium.

The Risk Management Division was responsible for drafting Disaster Relief Agreements between the State and the City of Grand Forks and the state and the County of Grand Forks. Risk Management also provided local authorities with authorization forms for debris removal, which the local authorities could present to private landowners prior to any debris removal activities.

The Information Services Division (ISD) assisted in establishing new telephone and data services for state and county agencies that were forced to leave their normal place of business. ISD sent a telecommunication technician to Larimore, ND, to establish data and voice services for those agencies that relocated in Larimore.

The Division of Facility Management is responsible for the development, maintenance, and preservation of the State Capitol Complex in Bismarck, North Dakota. The division also approves and keeps records of all leased office space throughout the state. During the flood, Facility Management worked with the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army to establish a collection site for flood relief donations. The division also authorized use of the visitor's parking lot to park a semi-trailer for collection of relief donations. Over a period of five weeks, 12 semi-trailer loads of recovery goods moved through the collection process.

Central Services Division provides departments and agencies centralized services to meet user needs through the administration and management of Central Duplicating, Central Supply, Purchasing, and Surplus property. During the flood, Central Duplicating provided on demand services for necessary printed materials and forms. Surplus Property focused on obtaining sandbags, food supplies, and generators to help cope with the emergency flood needs. The Surplus Property operation organized and purchased 482,000 sandbags from Japan. State Purchasing prioritized and handled emergency purchases for state agencies.

Central Personnel's primary role in the flood was to help coordinate benefits information and to recommend the use of special benefits for employees within affected agencies. Central Personnel responded to the Governor's Office request for assistance with an overall policy direction on employee needs by preparing information and recommendations for a statewide policy.

The N.D. State Radio Communications is covered in a separate section.

N.D. Secretary of State



Under the provisions of Chapter 43-07 of the N.D. Century Code (NDCC), the Secretary of State is responsible for the licensing of contractors. As a result of the flood and in anticipation that numerous contractors and merchants would be seeking licenses to work in Grand Forks, the Secretary of State, along with the Attorney General, established a One Stop Shop licensing center at the Regional Job Service Center in Grand Forks. Other participants in the "One Stop Shop" were Job Service North Dakota (JSND) and the Workers Compensation Bureau.

Besides issuing contractor and transient merchant licenses, the One-Stop Shop licensing center was also responsible for issuing photo identification badges to all contractors (whether new or existing) and all of their employees. Although ID badges had not been used in the contractor licensing process before this time, it was jointly decided among the state agencies and the city that it would be good protection for the citizens of Grand Forks if ID badges were issued. Additionally, criminal background checks were completed on each person before they were issued an ID badge. These background checks resulted in approximately 25-30 arrests for outstanding warrants.

From April 27 to May 30, 1997, the One Stop Shop issued ID cards to 1,766 employers and employees. From June 1 to July 22, 1997, the One Stop Shop and the city center issued 684 ID cards. In all, there were a total of 2,450 ID cards issued to 544 different contractors and their employees. Further from April 27 through July 22, 1997, a total of 448 contractor licenses were issued from the Office of the Secretary of State. Of these, a total of 165 licenses were issued in the Grand Forks One Stop Shop licensing center.

N.D. State Electrical Board



The N.D. State Electrical Board is responsible for safeguarding people and property from electrical hazards arising from the use of electricity for light, heat, and power. In response to the flood, the State Electrical Board immediately drafted a policy for flood damaged electrical work, and met with all electrical contractors in Grand Forks to go over policies and answer questions as to the proper procedures the contractors were to follow.

In addition, the Board coordinated with Northern States Power, Cass County Electric, and Nodak Electric to determine the number of homes and businesses that were inundated by flood waters. Volunteer electricians were used to verify dry basements, while retired electricians were hired and trained to be electrical inspectors.

N.D. State Plumbing Board

Immediately after the Red River inundated the city of Grand Forks, the N.D. State Plumbing Board, in cooperation with the N.D. Department of Health and local city governments, provided assistance with bringing on-line the potable water and waste water systems. After residents were able to return to their homes and begin rebuilding, the State Plumbing Board provided technical assistance to local plumbers.

N.D. State Radio Communications

(now known as N.D. Department of Emergency Services, Division of State Radio)



N.D. State Radio Communications (NDSR) is the State Warning Point for emergency situations. In response to the Red River Valley flooding, NDSR furnished additional radio equipment to law enforcement, the N.D. Division of Emergency Management (NDDEM), FEMA and all others associated with the flood. After the Grand Forks Public Service Answering Point for 9-1-1 was forced to evacuate, all 9-1-1 calls for Grand Forks County were transferred to NDSR. NDSR handled all their 9-1-1 calls until the first week in June. Further, NDSR had the law enforcement data circuits moved to the temporary locations of the Grand Forks Police Department and Sheriff's Office, along with Electronic Communications, Inc., of Bismarck, furnished the equipment to enable them to get back on line for law enforcement data communications.

When the One Stop Shop was set up for streamlining the process for transient merchants and contractors licensing, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation would fax information to NDSR, who would then make inquiries on the individuals via the National Crime Information Center and the State Criminal Warrant Information System. If information came back that an individual was wanted, NDSR would notify the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Through this process, more than 20 arrests were made and approximately 24 illegal aliens were identified.

N.D. State Water Commission



The N.D. State Water Commission (SWC) is responsible for the management and regulation of the use of water resources in the state of North Dakota. The SWC is divided into five divisions: Administration, Planning and Education, Water Appropriation, Water Development and the Atmospheric Resource Board. All five divisions, and nearly all employees, were involved with and contributed significantly to the 1997 flood relief effort.

During the first two weeks of the flood, the SWC supported the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) on a 24-hour basis. Working with the SEOC, the SWC monitored river stages and flows, provided flood updates at daily briefings, and arranged for flood fighting equipment and supplies to areas of need. Further, the SWC coordinated with county water resource districts and county commissions on a daily basis throughout the state to provide technical information and flood stage forecasts to areas not included in the National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts. When the pipe spillway for the Iverson Dam near Leeds, North Dakota, failed on April 23, 1997, SWC staff completed a dam breaching operation and used two large pumps to lower the reservoir's water level.

Other flood response efforts of the SWC engaged in were developing maps of areas inundated, modifying HEC-2 hydraulic models to identify potential inundation areas, assisting in the location and construction of the Washington Street emergency dike in Grand Forks, assisting the city of Grand Forks and the NDNG with developing an emergency water supply, and assisting the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) with stream gauging. As for recovery efforts, the SWC has met with Grand Forks officials and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to discuss alternative flood projects and locations.

In addition to assisting Grand Forks, the SWC has been very active with the Devils Lake flooding situation. As the local sponsor for the Devils Lake outlet, the SWC and the USACE have conducted many studies and held meetings on the alternative sizes and alignment, and downstream impacts. SWC has also contributed funding to the city of Devils Lake for cost share on a flood levee projection project.

N.D. Supreme Court



On Monday morning, April 21, 1997, representatives from the N.D. Supreme Court, State Bar Association of North Dakota and Legal Assistance of North Dakota met to discuss what needed to be done, and what could be done in light of the almost total devastation of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks that had occurred over the weekend. Telephone banks, document preservation, temporary office space for attorneys and judges, locating displaced attorneys and judges and the coordination of efforts with FEMA were discussed. The Court was urged to adopt an emergency order to alleviate uncertainty and hardship in pending cases.

Administrative Order 8 was adopted by the N.D. Supreme Court on April 23, 1997. This Order provided a 60-day extension of any deadline required by procedural statute or rule, or by order of a District Court, or by notice given under a procedural statute or rule, occurring between April 19 and June 18, 1997. The extension applies to: 1) cases venued in Grand Forks County, 2) to cases wherever venued in which one or more of the parties resides in Grand Forks County or in East Grand Forks, Minnesota, and 3) to cases wherever venued in which one or more of the parties is represented by an attorney residing in Grand Forks County or in East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

If deadlines for commencing an action in a civil case were between April 19 and June 18, 1997, Administrative Order 8 included a 60-day stay from the date a statute of limitation or repose would otherwise bar the claim. This extension applied to the same considerations as stated above. To ensure the continuation of judicial services in Grand Forks County, the N.D. Supreme Court further ordered that cases venued in Grand Forks County could be moved to or filed in the temporary clerk of court's office at Larimore, and heard in Lakota or elsewhere as directed by the presiding judge.

The Supreme Court web page provided information on temporary addresses for the judges and clerks in the District, as well as displaced attorneys, and other relevant law-related information, including notices from the Federal District Court. Throughout the flood crisis, the N.D. Supreme Court was in contact with the judges and clerk of court for Grand Forks County, and the State Bar Association in order to keep informed and provide assistance as necessary. The entry of Administrative Order 8 provided necessary relief to allow attorneys and litigants from Grand Forks and East Grand Forks to focus on refurbishing and rebuilding homes and communities.

N.D. Tax Department



The primary function of the Office of the N.D. Tax Commissioner is to administer taxes imposed by the N.D. Legislature. Therefore, the Department's focus in responding to 1997's blizzard and flood related disasters was to ease the tax return filing and compliance requirements whenever possible.

The Tax Department's primary activity during the 1997 flood was to more closely coordinate our efforts with IRS. In addition the department provided federal forms in our office that we would send out to taxpayers along with the ND forms in order to save taxpayers calling two offices. To help with recovery efforts, the Tax Department provided taxpayers with copies of previously filed income, sales, and income tax withholding returns needed to replace records lost during the flooding and to apply for disaster assistance. The Department also initiated payment agreements with taxpayers that were unable to pay taxes because of the disaster.

The Tax Commission granted extensions for filing individual tax returns and extensions for tax withholding and sales tax returns for businesses located in Cass, Pembina, and Richland counties and for the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. During the extension periods, all penalties and interest were waived. Furthermore, the Department identified property tax statutes that could be suspended by executive order allowing adjustments to property valuations by an Assessor. The assessor could then review and adjust the valuations of flood damaged property without requiring the property owner to file an application for abatement.

N.D. Tourism Department

(now known as N.D. Department of Commerce, Tourism Division)



This past spring's flood disaster in the Red River Valley had a short and long-term impact on the state's tourism industry. It was the Tourism Department's mission to help these flood stricken communities deal with immediate tourism issues, such as the closing of attractions, road reports, the canceling of events, as well as overcoming the long-term impact of decreased visitation to North Dakota due to misconceptions and fears about the flood.

The Department's primary mission was to contact industry people at the local convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, or individual attractions to assess any damages. This included whether attractions were closed, events were canceled, and whether the closings and cancellations were temporary or permanent. This information was passed on to potential travelers and the public. Another important tactic included contacting local people or the N.D. Department of Transportation (NDDOT) to assess road conditions and identify what roads were closed so NDDOT could warn travelers and direct them to alternative routes.

N.D. Tourism Department *(continued)*

The flood disaster and its prominence in the national and international media not only impacted Grand Forks, but also the entire state. The public's perception resulting from the negative publicity was that the entire state was flooded, not just Grand Forks. Therefore, in anticipation of a decrease in visitation by out of state travelers, the Department launched an aggressive in-state advertising campaign, featuring Governor Schafer, encouraging North Dakotans to vacation in "their own backyard" this summer.

The campaign was so successful that North Dakota inquiries increased 439% in June 1997 over June 1996. Several attractions throughout the state reported increased visitation ranging from 5% to 137%, with North Dakotans comprising a large percentage of the visitors. The Department also implemented a regional and national public relations campaign to begin overcoming the negative impact and misperceptions from the flood.

To help the Red River Valley with its promotional efforts, the 1998-99 N.D. Highway map will feature many tourism opportunities existing along the banks of the Red River. Next year, the Department's tourism guides and publications will feature more heavily on the Red River Valley and another regional and national public relations campaign will be implemented.

N.D. Workers Compensation Bureau

(now known as N.D. Workforce Safety and Insurance)



One week after the flood, a representative from the N.D. Workers Compensation Bureau, along with several staff members from other state agencies, traveled to Grand Forks to establish the "One Stop Shop" merchant and contractor licensing program. Because of the significant increase in out-of-state workers and contractors doing business in Grand Forks, the Bureau decided to impose a stricter policy as to the out of state employers' minimum contacts requiring North Dakota workers compensation coverage. The stricter policy was applied to all Grand Forks registrants with employees and required the establishment of a N.D. Workers Compensation account, regardless of their otherwise applicable "other-states" coverage. This simple, clear policy allowed faster processing of applications, simplified ongoing compliance enforcement and will promote the full reporting of all North Dakota payroll for premium collection.

From the Grand Forks location alone, the Bureau opened 101 new employer accounts. For those new accounts, the Bureau billed annual premiums of nearly \$204,000 and immediately collected initial payments of almost \$84,000 of that amount. In addition, the screening of contractors allowed the Bureau to collect over \$40,000 of severely delinquent premiums before allowing the registration of the employer.

State Historical Society of North Dakota



The State Historical Society of North Dakota took early action when the many late winter blizzards struck and the threat of flooding became imminent. Because there are numerous historic sites, museums, galleries and historic buildings and districts along waterways, especially the Red River, the possibility of significant damage due to flooding was great. When the flood struck, the Society began to coordinate local, state, regional, and national efforts.

In response to the impending threat of flooding, the museum staff took early action by calling, writing, and working directly with historic sites, museums, zoos, and galleries throughout the state, to give them information regarding flood assistance and to determine the amount of damage these entities have sustained. In addition, the museum staff, along with the State Archivist, went to Grand Forks and spent several days working with volunteers they recruited statewide, to salvage, clean and dry most of the contents of the Grand Forks County Historical Society's damaged exhibits.



The Society's archeological and historic preservation staff efforts were directed at review of the impact of federally-funded flood relief project on cultural resources in the state. Particular efforts in Grand Forks focused on providing mapping and location information to the city of Grand Forks and FEMA regarding the location of historic properties and districts within the city's boundaries, and identifying the rest of the city that remain unsurveyed. Other efforts in Grand Forks include providing printed information to owners of historic properties regarding methods to return their historic buildings to habitable/useable status while preserving their significant historic features, and awarding the city of Grand Forks a grant to hire a staff person for the Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission.

University of North Dakota



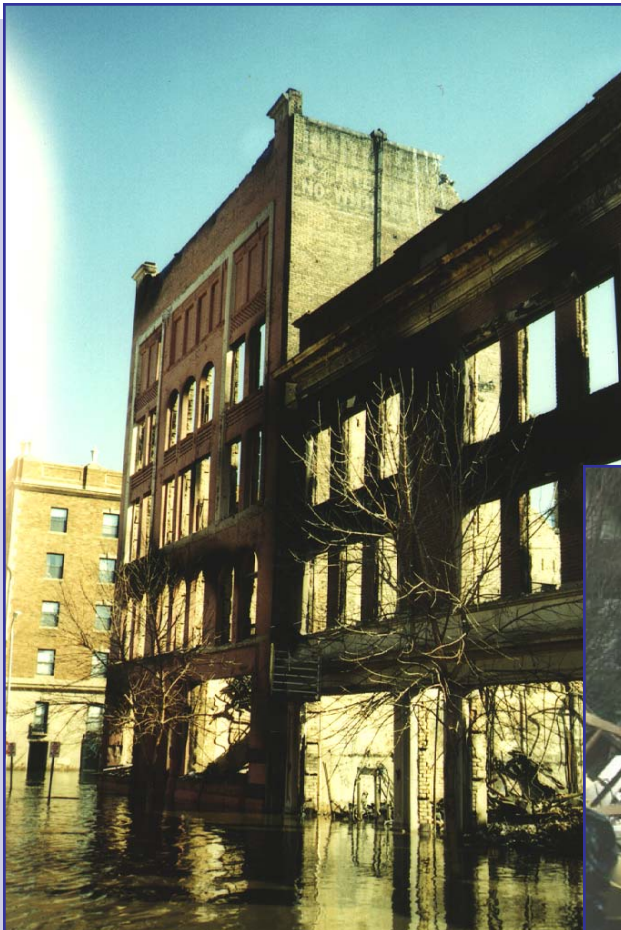
The city and University of North Dakota (UND) felt prepared for a record 49 foot crest of the Red River of the North. The previous record had been 48.8 feet. But, fueled by an ice storm which morphed into a three-day-long blizzard, the Red River of the North rose so high that it flooded the gauges that measured it. It overran roads, bridges, and most of the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks to crest at 54.11 feet, nearly twice as high as the flood stage of 28 feet. Eats Grand Forks and most of Grand Forks, as well as the University, were evacuated. Classes were cancelled three weeks early, marking the first time since World War I and II that classes ended early. Later, we could find that the flood was the largest disaster in U.S. history, measured by per capita damage and relocation of people.

The war against the flood was fought on many fronts, but UND became an indispensable battleground, providing space and services to the Emergency Operations Center, Grand Forks Police, Grand Forks city government, the Grand Forks Herald, N.D. National Guard (NDNG) , N.D. Department of Transportation (NDDOT) , the American Red Cross (ARC) , Salvation Army, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and FEMA as well as hosting one of the only radio stations left on the air and providing the only source of health care in the city.

UND's residence halls housed 728 faculty and staff members and their families after the flood, 656 members of the community, 164 FEMA and SBA employees and 412 utility workers, for a total of 1,960 people. The Hyslop Sports Center housed 4, 955 volunteers after the emergency. This was especially difficult given the lack of basic services such as water and electricity. In addition, UND housed 38 businesses which had been flooded out

A "Virtual University" was established, functioning from one small room, allowing UND to operate, recover, and inform students. This helped the University respond to the many constituents' needs, to answer questions and to begin the process of saving UND's enrollment.

UND's president decided to hold summer school on schedule. This decision rallied the flood team and helped stem enrollment drops, as well as bringing in needed income. An Off-Campus Housing Office was set up to facilitate housing searches for students. This aided in maintaining student enrollment.



N.D. Division of Emergency Management

(now known as N.D. Department of Emergency Services, Division of Homeland Security)



During the 1996-97 winter, a series of paralyzing blizzards impacted every North Dakota. The subsequent snowmelt and thaw of land already saturated during the previous fall resulted in disastrous overland flooding. Flood waters forced more than 50,000 North Dakotans from their homes and caused in unprecedented damage. In the Red River Valley, flooding that is only expected to occur every 500 years forced the evacuation of nearly every Grand Forks resident. The flood left images that will remain part of our collective conscious in years to come – rescue workers airlifting stranded North Dakotans from swift flood waters: rows of cots at shelters for thousands of evacuees; and firefighters lugging heavy equipment through ice-cold water to fight flames that destroyed 11 historic buildings in downtown Grand Forks.

The flood required a comprehensive, cohesive response that tested the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP), as well as the flexibility and durability of local, state, federal, private and volunteer resources.

RESPONSE EFFORTS

The first precursor of flooding evolved last fall when above average precipitation left land with a higher than normal water content. During winter, heavy snowfall broke record levels. When the snow melted, record runoff occurred on frozen soil too saturated to absorb the additional moisture. This flood represented the fifth consecutive year of flooding that resulted in a Major Presidential Disaster Declaration.

North Dakota's response to the disaster is the result of the accomplishments of a statewide team, organized by the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) and facilitated by the N.D. Division of Emergency Management (NDDEM). The SEOP offers an all-hazards approach to managing emergencies and calls upon the expertise of nearly 40 state agencies. NDDEM coordinates response and recovery efforts by these state agencies. The SEOP has been used as a model for planning, response, recovery and mitigation by other states.

When the disaster struck many agencies such as NDDEM, the State Water Commission (SWC), the N.D. National Guard (NDNG), the N.D. Highway Patrol (NDHP) and the N.D. Department of Transportation (NDDOT), staffed the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) around the clock. NDDOT and NDHP tackled road and safety issues. The SWC tracked the flood's progress and helped secure pumps for flooded communities. NDNG and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLOs) representing the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force coordinated military resources such as rescue helicopters, engineering equipment and personnel. The N.D. Department of Agriculture (NDAg) established the Agriculture Disaster Response Center as a central referral source was needed to provide information and assistance to rural residents, especially farmers and ranchers.

When the dikes were overtopped in Grand Forks, the Governor arrived at the SEOC in the wee hours of the morning along with the Director of the N.D. Department of Human Services (NDDHS) and the Chancellor of the N.D. University System (NDUS) to help arrange for shelter for flood victims. The N.D. Department of Health (NDDoH) organized medical care for evacuees.

RECOVERY EFFORTS

Response and recovery efforts overlapped with little, if any, distinction between the two phases. While the western and central parts of the state began their recovery from flooding, eastern waterways swelled to record levels and inundated million acres of land and thousands of homes.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established a temporary Disaster Field Office (DFO) adjacent to the SEOC before relocating to a larger facility accommodating hundreds of employees. Federal and military officials assisted state officials in managing both response and recovery efforts. Three FEMA disaster recovery programs were initiated in response to the disaster's aftermath – Individual Assistance, Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

SUCCESSSES

The level of involvement from state agencies was unprecedented. Functional and task coordinators performed tasks as outlined by the SEOP, dedicating countless hours to response and recovery work. The demands of the assigned duties were such that agencies directly involved in the flood fight staffed the SEOC 24-hours a day. Our SEOP provided an excellent framework for coordinating response and recovery efforts of the nearly 40 state agencies.

Before the disaster, NDDEM actively pursued and promoted flood preparedness measures for communities and individuals. NDDEM also supported hazard mitigation efforts taken in advance of flooding to include ice dusting, the waiver of National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements for the Devils Lake area and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) efforts to institute temporary flood protection measures in many communities throughout the state. NDDEM staff participated in many

N.D. Division of Emergency Management *(continued)*

community awareness meetings designed to encourage flood readiness. NDDEM already had in place updated administrative plans for Hazard Mitigation, Public Assistance and the Individual and Family Grant Programs. These plans enabled the agency to proceed in a timely manner in administering these disaster recovery programs with only minor revisions were needed to satisfy FEMA requirements for current administrative plans.

Despite the catastrophic nature of the disaster, federal, state, local and volunteer and private resources worked in partnership to resolve problems quickly. A cadre of retired NDDHS and NDDOT as well as temporary employees from the N.D. Legislative Council allowed NDDEM to quickly establish its Public Assistance and Individual and Family Grant Programs. Their expertise reduced training time requirements. Individual and Family Grant Program Disaster Assistance Employees from FEMA, Iowa and other states provided excellent training to applicant processors.

Daily briefings held during the disaster allowed state and federal agencies to discuss weather conditions, damages, river levels, community and individual needs, and requests for assistance. These briefings assisted functional and task coordinators in their efforts to decide the best allocation of resources. In addition, as of October 10 NDDEM produced 68 Situation Reports. Support received from state and federal agencies in providing timely, accurate information was outstanding and allowed NDDEM to adhere as close as possible to its publication schedule. These Situation Reports were posted on the NDDEM web site allowing the Joint Information Center (JIC) to refer reporters for additional information, saving the JIC invaluable time for addressing issues. NDDEM kept track of messages, requests for assistance and actions taken to address those requests through use of the Emergency Information Systems (EIS) software.

LESSONS LEARNED

State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP)

The disaster underscored the importance of keeping existing plans current, but also pointed out areas where additional plans or revisions are necessary in the SEOP. NDDEM did not have adequate plans in place for addressing unsolicited donations. The N.D. League of Cities (NDLC) stepped forward and took responsibility for receiving and distributing an overwhelming amount of donations. NDLC did so with minimal plans and hazy expectations of the work required.

The catastrophic nature of the disaster taxed the plans and capabilities of agencies directly involved in mass care and sheltering issues. The late night evacuation of Grand Forks required several agencies with available housing to assemble at the SEOC to establish mass care sites. Although plans were vague and inadequate, these agencies managed to respond promptly to the needs of disaster victims.

The Public Works Annex to the SEOP also presented problems because functions were too broad to be contained in one annex. Uncertainty developed during the response phases as to what agencies had authority for the various tasks. Although many agencies were prepared for their responsibilities under the SEOP, others did not fully realize what their tasks would entail. A few agencies also were unaware of the importance of working through the SEOC to ensure the best coordination of resources.

NDDEM continues its annual update to the SEOP and its attachments and reference materials. In addition, NDDEM will take corrective actions in response to deficiencies noted during the disaster. Corrections to deficiencies in the donations management plan are already underway with the assistance of the NDLC. A more detailed plan will be developed identifying a state agency responsible for coordinating donations. NDDEM will assist the responsible agency in developing a plan that outlines the concept of operations, tasks and duties required.

Mass care and shelter issues will also be re-evaluated. Objectives of such efforts include determining agencies best able to address mass care and shelter needs and developing plans that more clearly reflect their responsibilities. These plans should then be exercised periodically to ensure each agency understand their role and to point out strengths and deficiencies of such plans.

Because the Public Works annex is so broad, NDDEM plans to divide it into two separate annexes, transportation and engineering. Content of both annexes will be designed to more clearly define roles of agencies with transportation and engineering functions.

In response to the uncertainty of a few agencies about their roles in disasters, NDDEM recommends conducting more briefings with such agency personnel to explain the SEOP and the important role they play in the plan. The objective is to encourage participation in the plan and ownership of duties.

State Emergency Operations Center

The flooding disaster underlined the importance of having functional and task coordinators in one central location at the SEOC. Coordinators could better determine how to match available resources with needs. However, the demands of response and recovery

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work required state agencies to staff the SEOC for extended hours. Work by some agencies required around the clock staffing of the SEOC. Because of construction in the SEOC in 1997, task and functional coordinators were relocated to an alternate SEOC that lacked adequate telephone and computer lines.

Flow of information was difficult to manage given the magnitude of information processed. Specific information was not readily available making personnel changes, shift changes and general continuity difficult. During the response phase, state and federal agencies occasionally duplicated efforts to procure resources which is attributed, in part, to the differences in terminology. Federal agencies used the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) while state agencies based their functions on the SEOP annexes. With a very overtaxed state response operation, the information flow and status of mission assignments were difficult to follow.

As this disaster dictated, state agencies, including NDDEM, will need to be prepared to staff the SEOC for longer hours. Plans for the new SEOC, which is under construction (*in 1997*), should correct many of the discomforts confronting functional and task coordinators, including availability of telephone and computer lines, as well as work space.

In response to information flow difficulties, closer coordination between state and federal counterparts is recommended to avoid duplication of efforts. A more thorough understanding of responsibilities of federal and state counterparts will enhance response efforts. Revisions are recommended to the SEOP to include more detailed operations information flow that includes military and ESF functions. Within the SEOC, status boards should not only track state resources utilized, but federal resources, as well.

State-Federal Coordination

Coordination between state and federal disaster workers was generally outstanding; however, some problems developed when FEMA workers were ready to begin fieldwork but state workers and resources were needed for response efforts. The nature of the disaster was such that while recovery work was underway in the western part of the state response work had just begun in the east.

To more effectively use resources, State and FEMA should develop a start-up schedule to better coordinate assets and enhance both response and recovery work.

Situation Reports

Support from state and federal agencies in providing accurate and timely information allowed NDDEM to produce Situation Reports on schedule and with few errors. However, some actions taken by state agencies were not immediately reported to NDDEM and a couple-day delay occurred in reporting such information.

Because the Situation Reports provide an historical perspective and documentation of damages and actions, it is imperative that state and federal agencies continue to provide information for these reports. In order to ensure that all agencies continue such efforts, NDDEM may consider issuing a reminder at the onset to all functional and task coordinators to provide such information. Producers of the Situation Reports should develop a contact list of each agency that lists persons responsible for disseminating information.

Individual and Family Grant Program

The Individual and Family Grant program staff, had limited space at the Disaster Field Office (DFO). Hence, NDDEM was not able to hire more employees as recommended by staffing formulas developed by FEMA. Staff members also struggled to keep up with the workload, initially because the program was limited in the number of hours and days allowed for work due to overtime costs. The overwhelming number of cases became more manageable with temporary support given by FEMA National Teleregistration and two employees from the state of Iowa who traveled to North Dakota to assist with case review.

NDDEM recommends adhering to staffing formulas and ensuring adequate space for staff members so that applications can be processed in a more timely fashion and money distributed to flood victims. NDDEM should also develop a list of applicant processors and conduct regular training for them, as well as NDDHS staff members who participated in producing Damage Survey Reports. Other recommendations include the continuation of temporary support from other states. Such action not only assists the state in responding to the disaster but also offers training opportunities for other states.

Public Assistance Program

Public Assistance inspectors and fellow staff members worked long, demanding hours in response to the large volume of work necessitated by the disaster. Many state and federal inspectors are retired and not accustomed to such strenuous hours. Damage Survey Reports (DSRs) are still written by hand (*in 1997*), causing delays processing such reports. Additionally, state and federal inspectors expressed their uncertainty about writing DSRs for building repairs.

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Twelve-hour days for six days per week are satisfactory for an initial period of the disaster, but those hours should be eventually reduced to 10-hour days for six or seven days a week. Shorter workdays and workweeks for prolonged recovery periods will reduce fatigue and the number of mistakes. The results will include more efficient, accurate reports, less quality control requirements and better customer service.

NDDEM also recommends that FEMA consider supplying each inspection team with a laptop computer and digital camera if such technology is found to be cost effective. Additional training in building inspection is recommended, as is assigning inspectors to specifically addressed multi-dwelling building inspections.

NDDEM strongly recommends that FEMA return to the Federal-State-Local team approach used during the winter storm disaster. Presently, either a state or federal inspector accompanies a local inspector. However, as was proven during the winter storm disaster, a Federal-State-Local team expedites DSRs and increases efficiencies.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Several state agencies are separately managing federal and state funds, which are directly or indirectly related to flood hazard reduction. Local governments are not familiar with the criteria of each program; the required applications are, many times, too lengthy and the required environmental surveys are difficult to understand. Because they do not have the staff to complete the project application, these entities sometimes miss an opportunity to receive funding for long-term solutions to their flooding problems.

During recovery, representatives of FEMA Mitigation performed grantee tasks and gave grantee-level assistance without prior coordination with the state. Representatives went as far as writing acquisition applications for the city of Grand Forks and compiling data of damaged homes for city officials. NDDEM Mitigation officials were never approached by the city to secure outside assistance, or by FEMA for state permission to give outside assistance to local officials. We were, in essence, left out of the loop.

As part of recovery efforts, FEMA mitigation specialists developed an accelerated Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) application for use by local officials planning acquisition projects. The accelerated application, while a viable concept, was not adequately staffed to determine strengths and weaknesses prior to distribution to local officials. Applications that were submitted missed essential elements of information.

Revisions to the HMGP application project should be pursued. NDDEM recommends one simplified project application, including an environmental assessment, for local governments to apply to one agency. A funding committee comprised of federal and state agencies would review the applications.

In addition, NDDEM mitigation staff and FEMA mitigation staff should develop a partnership between federal, state and local governments. A risk assessment will be conducted by NDDEM to help establish multi-hazard mitigation plans in all 53 counties.

Tracking Costs

NDDEM received many requests for information about flood-related costs from the media, federal and state agencies, the congressional delegation and even foreign embassies. These requests, while important, required additional time for staff members to research questions, requiring them to divert attention away from response and recovery work.

NDDEM recommends assigning a statistician to keep track of these costs. This would enable staff to address such questions quickly, and would help prevent duplication when recording costs.

This document was assembled by the
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Division of Homeland Security
N.D. Department of Emergency Services
P.O. Box 5511
Bismarck, ND 58506

(701) - 328-8100
nddes@nd.gov

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