



Blaine County, Idaho

Local Emergency Planning Committee

Working together for a safer community

www.BlaineEmergency.org

4/13/2016

HIGH WATER/FLOOD AWARENESS REMINDER

As we are all aware, given the right temperatures and precipitation events(s), we could still have unusually high water and/or flooding. Runoff and river flow relates directly to soil saturation rates, daytime and nighttime temperatures, and rain/snow events. As of now, we are losing water content from the snowfields at a slow rate due to the warmup and rain, but there is large volume of water in the remaining snowfields. Many years, the snowfields of the lower elevations and valley floors are all but gone. This means that the remaining water is mostly at upper elevations on slopes. This year, as in 2006 and 2011, there is still an impressive amount of lower snow in the upper drainages, creating a very large surface area of remaining snow. This adds to the total amount of water that must come off sometime this spring. The fact is that the longer into the season the snowmelt is postponed, the greater the chances of a large water event due to a sudden warmup. So everyone around the rivers and the side drainages should be aware of this situation and make preparations.

In flood mitigation and flood fight operations, all stream alterations must be approved by the appropriate governing jurisdiction, in most cases the county, since most of the river bed is within county jurisdiction. It should be kept in mind that all work done to move or control moving water will have an effect, mostly negative unless legally and properly done, on landowners across the stream or downstream. Landowners don't have the right to take actions that will negatively affect their neighbors. Actions should be taken to protect one's home, but not trying to change the flow of the river. Existing and historical floodplain areas play important roles in allowing water to spread out and release pressure from the river channel.

Use of sandbags and bladders without a stream alteration permit is permitted as long as they do not block the stream channel or floodplain and no sediments are released into the stream during or following the flood event. Land owners will be, for the most part, responsible for the protection of their own properties. Bladders, sandbags, and similar barriers should be close to the home structure but not against it. Let the constructed barrier, not the buildings foundation, absorb the water pressure. Local city and county governments normally work to protect public property and important infrastructure such as roads and bridges. Contact your local authorities if you have questions about procedures and processes in flood response activities. Many in the county have been through high water events before so they are good sources of advice and recommendations.

High and fast water should be avoided at all times because flowing water can be deceiving and dangerous, especially with floating debris. The Big Wood River west of Hailey, for instance, is running at approximately 1000 cfs (cubic feet per second) at the 3 foot height, while at the 6 foot height at the Hailey gauge it is running at 4000 cfs, meaning that for twice the height increase of the river, four times the amount of water is flowing. Similar ratios apply to most local drainages to some degree. If and when flood levels are approached, public notifications will begin.

Children and pets should avoid the extremely cold river water and its potential danger at all times. Flash flooding and quickly rising waters in the river, as well as its tributaries, can be caused by heavy rain events, and we all should be aware of weather events in the area.

Be aware of any unusual water events along the rivers and streams and report to them to local authorities. You can sign up for emergency warning system through www.blainecounty.org homepage—Emergency Alert Program.

For more information on stream alteration permits: Business hours 788-5570. After hours emergencies call 911.

BLAINE COUNTY DISASTER SERVICES 788-5508

