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**KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT**  
**Lawrence A. Stelma – Sheriff**

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701 Ball Avenue, N.E. • Grand Rapids • Michigan • 49503



For Immediate Release  
April 25, 2013

## **Emergency Management Division Flood Update**

**Kent County** – The Kent County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution this morning to extend the local State of Emergency for an additional 30 days. This means the declaration, made April 19, remains in effect for all Kent County villages, townships and cities, through May 24, 2013. This extension gives Kent County official additional time to complete damage assessments. This process is necessary to determine if Governor Rick Snyder will issue a Declaration of Disaster; a step towards requesting FEMA funding or assistance.

Less than a quarter of the residents evacuated have been allowed to return home. “While the water is receding, it is still at or above flood stage in many locations,” said Jack Stewart, Emergency Management Coordinator. “We are in touch with jurisdictions and know where flooding issues have occurred. Teams will be surveying neighborhoods in the coming weeks, and those assessments will be turned over to the state to determine if a disaster will be declared by the Governor.”

The next step after that is asking for FEMA assistance. Many residents have been calling our Emergency Management Division with requests for FEMA funding. We are following very specific protocol and it is still very early in the process, therefore we are unable to answer any questions about FEMA. We will put information out as it becomes available, and ask for your patience and understanding through this process. We suggest residents work with their insurance companies until further notice.

Many families have had questions about what to do next. “We ask residents who are in their homes and have damage to clean and restore as much as possible at this time,” Stewart said. “Document everything you can. Keep track of any damage or losses.” When cleaning, wear gloves at all times, and remove all highly absorbent items: carpet and padding, mattresses and upholstered furniture, for example. Bag these items in plastic, or label them as contaminated with sewage. Wash down all walls, floors and surfaces with clean water and a low suds detergent. Red Cross has cleaning kits available. Call 616.456.8661 for more information.

Updates and information on the flooding can be found at [www.accessKent.com/News](http://www.accessKent.com/News). If you require additional information (or an on-camera interview) please contact Lt. Jack Stewart, Kent County Emergency Management Coordinator, at 616.632.6255, Undersheriff Jon Hess at 616.632.6236, or PIO Lisa LaPlante at 616.632.7182.

1. If you were evacuated from your home, DO NOT RETURN until authorities say it is safe to return. Local officials are working to determine when it is safe for residents to return to their homes, and with Consumers Energy to restore power when safe. If your power is out and/or your gas shut down, do not attempt to turn these on yourself. Do not light matches in a house or business until it is deemed safe. More information at:

<http://www.accesskent.com/Health/EmergencyPrep/pdfs/CleaningUpFactSheet.pdf>.

2. The no-contact advisory for the Grand River throughout ALL of Kent County will remain in effect until further notice. Concerns include a fast-moving current, debris, and contamination. Our first responders have had to save several people who ventured into the water (via kayak or raft) and ended up in trouble. **Stay out of the water - period.**

3. Many residents may be using generators for power or kerosene heaters. Use these items carefully:

- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions before running any equipment;
- DO NOT use a generator inside your home, garage, crawl space, or other enclosed areas. Fatal fumes can build up;
- Generators should be located in a dry area outdoors, away from open windows, vents, or doors;
- Keep a battery-powered carbon monoxide detector near the area where you are running a generator;
- Do not use heaters or generator near combustible materials.

4. If you have well water and the well head was submerged at any time, your water may be contaminated. It should not be used for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, dish washing, or bathing. Water testing sample bottles are available from the Kent County Health Department and their four satellite clinics, First Baptist Church in Lowell, Alpine Baptist Church in Comstock Park, as well as most township offices throughout Kent County. Until testing results are complete, use bottled water, DO NOT use your well water. People drinking or washing with water from a private well that has been flooded will risk getting sick. If you are uncertain about the integrity of your well, call a registered well driller or licensed plumber. (The Kent County Health Department recommends testing well water annually, regardless of weather conditions.)

5. Clean and disinfect businesses and homes where the flooding occurred within 24-48 hours of returning. Wear gloves when handling anything that may have been in flood water or sewage. These areas could have organisms that cause illness to humans and pets. Be careful to avoid sharp metal while cleaning, as cuts can lead to tetanus concerns. More information can be found here: <http://www.accesskent.com/Health/EmergencyPrep/pdfs/CleaningUpFactSheet.pdf>

6. Throw away any food that came in contact with floodwater or sewage, or, if in a freezer or refrigerator, throw out food with an unusual color, odor, or if the temperature is above 45° F internally.

7. Hazardous waste, such as gasoline, insect repellent, antifreeze or motor oil, can be taken to these drop-off sites:

**Transfer station at North Kent Landfill**

2908 10 Mile Rd NE  
Rockford, MI 49341

**The Kent County Road Commission**

1500 Scribner NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

**The Wyoming Waste Water Treatment Plant**

2350 Ivanrest Ave SW  
Grandville, MI 49418

**Kentwood Public Works**

5068 Breton Rd SE  
Kentwood, MI 49508

More information, including hours for Saturday drop-off, can be found at:

[http://www.accesskent.com/Departments/DPW/sat\\_collections.htm](http://www.accesskent.com/Departments/DPW/sat_collections.htm).

The American Red Cross continues to operate two shelter locations in Kent County: the Alpine Baptist Church in Comstock Park is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. First Baptist Church in Lowell will be open until 8 p.m. tonight, and from 8 a.m. until noon Friday, April 26, 2013, and will then close. Those needing overnight shelter should call 211. The locations also can provide residents with clean-up kits, which include a mop, gloves, broom, bucket, scrub brush and cleaning chemicals. For more information, contact the American Red Cross at 616.456.8661.