

GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES WAIVER OF PERMIT REQUIREMENTS FOR EMERGENCY RECOVERY WORK

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) are waiving permitting requirements for emergency repairs as result of Hurricane Irene, allowing community leaders and private landowners to directly respond to the need for waterfront, road and bridge stabilization, and emergency repairs.

"Government needs to do all it can to help devastated communities and homeowners get back on their feet and sometimes that means getting out of the way and allowing for quick rebuilding and restoration," Governor Cuomo said.

Terry Martino, Executive Director of the Adirondack Park Agency, said, "We want to make clear that the APA is not applying its permitting jurisdiction to any emergency project necessary in response to Hurricane Irene for the protection of life or property."

Joseph Martens, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, said, "In response to the Governor's call for state agencies to prepare for Hurricane Irene, we mobilized emergency management teams in every affected region from Long Island to the Adirondacks to assist localities in dealing with flood control, water treatment, oil and gas spills and public safety. Those teams will remain in place and all agency staff will focus on hurricane-related damage and assisting the public until recovery is complete. We are suspending permitting requirements for stream beds and banks to enable the quickest possible reaction to storm recovery efforts."

Local officials responsible for roads and bridges as well as individual property owners should take the urgent and immediate steps to stabilize and repair property, roads and bridges without consultation with the APA. The APA will be available to confirm emergency advice for officials or individuals in writing when requested. The public is advised not to enter streams, rivers and lakes where fast currents and submerged debris can be hazardous and life threatening.

Environmental Permitting in the Aftermath of Hurricane Irene

Hurricane Irene has caused widespread damage to public and private property and infrastructure from wind, flooding and stream bank and coastal erosion. Much of the replacement and repair of the damage will take place in environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal erosion areas, protected waterways, and wetlands. Permitting for construction and repair projects in these areas is suspended. When possible, work should be undertaken in consultation with the DEC to ensure that the project will be carried out in a manner that will cause the least adverse impact to natural resources.

To consult on environmental impacts in the wake of Hurricane Irene, individuals and businesses may contact the Regional Environmental Permits Office (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/50230.html>).

Storm Debris Disposal Guidance

DEC is also providing general assistance and guidance to help local communities address damaged facilities, debris disposal and solid waste. DEC has developed guidance for storm-related waste from damaged areas <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/8751.html>. Responsible parties should contact the DEC regional office (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/50230.html>) for specific project applications.

In an effort to keep overall cleanup costs to a minimum and to reduce the overall impacts from the disaster debris it is important that those conducting the cleanup be mindful to separate out those waste materials which are benign or exempt from regulation, such as tree branches and limbs, from other more environmentally concerning debris during the cleanups. Care should be taken to set aside such materials as household hazardous waste, gasoline containers and propane canisters and other regulated solid wastes that would require special handling.

Emergency Spill Response

DEC is deploying spill response teams to assess flooding related spills throughout the impacted areas. DEC operates a 24-hour Emergency Spill Hotline ([1-800-457-7362](tel:1-800-457-7362)) for the public to notify the department of suspected spills.

Actions of the Office of Public Protection

Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) and Rangers were assigned provide staffing at State Office of Emergency Management (SEOM), New York City and County OEMs for impacted areas. DEC ECO and Ranger personnel and patrol vehicles continue to be deployed for rescue, transport and evacuation support in various localities in the Hudson Valley, Catskills, Capital Region and Adirondacks.

Forest Rangers were assigned to assist with road closures, radio tower failures, state land assessments and equipment relays for other agencies. DEC boats and airboats were deployed for flooding assessment and rescue in localities throughout the affected areas (see sample narratives below).

DEC Forest Ranger Rescue - Highlights

Ohio State University Rescue: On Saturday 8/27 at approximately 8:45 pm, the DEC was notified that 50 campers from Ohio State University were camping in the Five Ponds Wilderness in four groups of 12 at separate locations. The group leader requested assistance pulling groups, who had no knowledge of expected storm, from the back-country. Two DEC Rangers hiked the expected 20-mile loop overnight to establish contact and escort groups to safety. All hikers were found and extracted by trail and boat assistance as of Monday 8/29.

Sacandaga River Rescue: Rangers rescued three subjects on the Sacandaga River after they went canoeing after Hurricane Irene went through the area. The Sacandaga River was running high, and the three subjects rolled their canoe in to the swift water. The three became stranded in 3.5 feet of water in the middle river. They were unable to make it back to shore due to swift current. Rangers responded with an inflatable kayak from Northville and extracted them from the water. Subjects were mildly hypothermic and were turned over to Fulton County Ambulance for treatment.

Additional news available at <http://www.governor.ny.gov/>