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Governor Chris Christie Declares State of Emergency In Preparation For Hurricane Joaquin

Thursday, October 1, 2015

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Trenton, NJ - Governor Chris Christie today declared a state of emergency throughout the state as a result of severe weather conditions expected in the coming days. The National Weather Service is forecasting a dangerous nor'easter weather pattern impacting New Jersey beginning on October 1, 2015, including high winds, very heavy rain, inland river flooding, as well as major coastal flooding with heavy surf and beach erosion. The National Hurricane Center currently has forecasted the track for the impending weather event Joaquin, now a major hurricane, showing it moving northward off the mid-Atlantic coast late on or about October 4, 2015, which may cause significant flooding, dangerous storm surges between eight and ten feet, substantial wind damage, and stream and river flooding threatening homes and other structures, and endangering lives in the State. These severe weather conditions may cause power outages, impede transportation and the flow of traffic in New Jersey, and thereby make it difficult or impossible for citizens to obtain the necessities of life, as well as essential services such as police, fire, and first aid.

"There are two concerns for New Jersey coming out of the next four days of weather. The immediate threat is for severe flooding on Friday and Saturday, the second is tracking the path of Hurricane Joaquin as those forecasts become clearer over the next 24 to 72 hours. Whether or not Joaquin is a direct issue for New Jersey by Monday, we know that there is definitely going to be moderate and likely to be major flooding events in South Jersey on Friday and Saturday, with 5-6 inches of rainfall expected to come over those two days," said Governor Christie. "At particular risk are communities along the Delaware Bay in Salem and Cumberland counties and the coastal communities in Atlantic and Cape May counties. So as a result I've signed an executive order declaring a State Of Emergency in New Jersey as of this morning, giving our emergency management folks the tools they're going to need to ensure a speedy and an orderly response."

The declaration activates elements of the State Emergency Operations Plan, broadening powers of the New Jersey State Police including traffic control, limiting access and egress from impacted areas.

As provided by the declaration, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management will be authorized to mobilize and deploy resources beginning immediately to respond to the storm conditions, including resources of the New Jersey State Police, New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and New Jersey Department of Transportation, in coordination with county and municipal emergency management officials in impacted areas throughout the state.

In addition, the following preemptive steps to mobilize government in preparation for the storm are being taken:

New Jersey Office of Emergency Management:

State Emergency Operations Center was activated at 6:00 am this morning to monitor the storm and it will remain open as long as necessary to meet anticipated challenging conditions.

Currently, NJOEM is monitoring the weather situation with the main focus on preparedness.

New Jersey Department of Transportation:

DOT is inspecting and clearing drainage systems; activating all regional emergency operations centers, testing communication systems and topping off fuel supplies. In addition, they have placed emergency contractors on alert to effect emergency repairs if needed and pre-positioned debris removal equipment.

DOT Operations division has the ability to utilize more than 700 people in more than 65 crews with more than 500 pieces of heavy equipment to respond to the storm.

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New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection:

As of this morning, no rivers are forecast to go to floodstage, but DEP will continue to monitor the situation as the weekend forecast becomes more certain

DEP has assessed which beaches are most vulnerable and has reached out to towns to ask if they need assistance from the State to move sand or need more sand

DEP has contacted all wastewater and water supply facilities them to make sure they are secure and have emergency plans at the ready and backup power on site (generators and fuel)

New Jersey Board of Public Utilities:

BPU has been in active discussion with power companies and public utility leadership to ensure that their companies are preparing for the storm and to make sure we are kept abreast of critical issues.

New Jersey Department of Health:

DOH has reached out to hospitals, FQHCs, long-term care facilities and dialysis centers to update them on the latest storm projections, remind them to get emergency staffing plans in place and to set up regular updates via conference calls.

New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness:

OHSP and State Police are working in partnership to ensure proper staging and availability of commodities regionally throughout the state

NJ TRANSIT:

NJ TRANSIT's top priority is passenger safety of the traveling public. Anyone planning to travel during the storm is urged to allow extra time and be extremely careful traveling in and around stations, on platforms and on-board trains, buses, light rail vehicles and Access Link vehicles.

NJ TRANSIT's maintenance forces have begun stockpiling stone, while inspecting culverts, drainage pipes and rights-of-way to ensure they are clear of blockages that could exacerbate flooding and disrupt service. NJT rail and light rail crews and equipment will be on standby to respond to downed trees, wires and flooding.

A copy of the Governor's Executive Order declaring the State of Emergency is attached to the release.

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