



# Spring Freshet Emergency Response Policy



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## 1. Background

Each spring, geographical locations within the Town of Grand Bay-Westfield (The Town) along the St. John River are prone to flooding resulting from the Spring Freshet. These areas are considered to reach “Flood Stage” when water levels reach 4.2 meters (m) as measured at the Quispamsis-Saint John measuring station. Most years, even for those areas reaching flood stage, the flooding results in minimal impact to private and public properties and requires no emergency response from the Town. However, there have been instances of severe flooding:

Year	Peak Water Level
1973	5.31m
2008	5.2m
2018	5.76m
2019	5.56m

In each of these cases, the flooding resulted in significant impacts on both public and private properties. Additionally, they required activation of the Town’s Emergency Operations Center (not confirmed for 1973) as well as deployment of resources beyond the scope of the Town’s normal operating capacity.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to the response to annual St. John River spring freshet only. It does not apply to flooding resulting from other sources such as localized flooding associated with heavy rainfall events.

Response to significant emergencies or natural disasters has a shared responsibility beginning with the property owner, the municipality, the province and finally the federal government. As each of these levels reaches a point where they cannot provide an appropriate response on their own, requests can be made to the next level for response and recovery assistance.

There is no statutory requirement for a municipality to provide private property owners with resources or to take preventative actions related to flooding. However, by way of this policy, the Town will provide limited assistance to property owners in protecting their property from spring freshet flooding. This policy will set the parameters for this assistance as well as parameters for protection of publicly owned property and maintenance of emergency access to flood prone areas.

## 3. Parameters of Response

New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization (NB-EMO) River Watch has set the following criteria for St. John River spring freshet water levels for the local region including the Town of Grand Bay-Westfield (GBW). All water level data referred to in this policy is obtained from NB-EMO River Watch which is updated daily during the annual spring freshet.

Area	FLOOD STAGE	ADVISORIES	WATCHES	WARNINGS
Quispamsis-Saint John	4.2m	2.2m – 3.2m	3.2m – 3.6m	3.7+m

Whereas the flood water levels of 2008 were the lowest levels requiring an emergency response, the level of 5.2m will be the level used to qualify a spring freshet being categorized as severe flooding.

To ensure property owners and the Town have the required preparation time the following table will be used as a guideline for responding to various flood levels. Actions for Advisory, Watch and Warning Stages will begin when those levels are reached. Actions for Flood Stage and Severe Flood Stage will begin when the River Watch 3-day or 5-day forecast predicts noted flood levels may be reached.

Flood Levels	Actions to be taken	Responsible party
<b>Advisory Stage – 2.2m to 3.2m Through Watch Stage – 3.2m to 3.6m</b>	Daily monitoring of NB-EMO River Watch 3-day and 5-day forecast.	Property Owners GBW-EMO
	Public messaging regarding flood preparedness	GBW-EMO
	Inventory and prepare resources (sandbags, sandbagging machine, road barriers) for potential deployment.	GBW-Works
	Secure supply of sand and loader for sandbagging machine.	GBW-Works
<b>Warning Stage 3.7m+</b>	GBW Municipal Emergency Operations Centre (MEOC) to activate to Level 1 – Active Monitoring	GBW-EMO
	Activation of MEOC phone line.	GBW-EMO
<b>Flood Stage 4.2m (forecasted)</b>	Public messaging regarding flood response	GBW-EMO
	Staging of sandbag inventory for distribution.	GBW-EMO GBW-Works
	Staging of sandbagging machine at filling site and coordinate availability of contractor to operate and fill machine.	GBW-EMO GBW-Works
	MEOC Activation Level 2 – Partial Activation.	GBW-EMO



Flood Levels	Actions to be taken	Responsible party
<b>Severe Flood Stage – 5.2m (forecasted)</b>	Open Sandbag distribution for residents of GB-W only. (ID required). Operating hours to be determined by GBW-EMO personnel	GBW-EMO
	Open sandbag filling site. Sand to be available 24/7. Sandbagging machine to be staffed by contractor for refilling of machine only. Residents are responsible for filling and transporting of bags.	GBW-EMO GBW-Works
	Public messaging regarding flood response and safety.	GBW-EMO
<b>Severe Flood Stage – 5.8m+ (forecasted)</b>	Establish planning group to evaluate potential impacts of water levels surpassing historical record.	GBW-EMO
<b>Post flood</b>	Conduct damage assessments.	GBW-EMO
	Implement flood clean up and recovery plan.	GBW-EMO
	Public messaging regarding clean up and recovery.	GBW-EMO

At the discretion of the GBW-EMO Director, the Town CAO, or by motion of Mayor and Council, the Actions to be Taken timeline may be adjusted based on specific, unpredictable or variable circumstances.

To best ensure continued regular operations for the Town, contractors should be used for tasks directly related to response once Severe Flood Stage is forecasted by NB-EMO River Watch.

#### 4. Authorization

The Spring Freshet Emergency Response Policy is authorized by motion of Mayor and Council on the recommendation of the CAO and the Grand Bay-Westfield Emergency Measures Organization.

#### 5. Glossary

- a. **Spring Freshet:** variations of water levels in rivers from the melting of ice and snow.

- b. **Municipal Emergency Operations Center (MEOC):** location where Town Senior Staff and Emergency Measures personnel coordinate planning, response to and recovery from emergencies affecting the Town of Grand Bay-Westfield.
- c. **MEOC Activation Level 1:** Active Monitoring: An actual or potential emergency situation has been identified. Continuous monitoring by Municipal Emergency Operations Centre (MEOC) members is taking place. 24/7 monitoring of MEOC phone line begins.
- d. **MEOC Activation Level 2:** Partial Activation: Some positions are now filled and operating in the MEOC. Operational hours of MEOC will be dependent on requirements of the response, however, 24/7 monitoring of MEOC phone line continues.
- e. **MEOC Activation Level 3:** Full Activation: Most or all positions are filled and operating in the MEOC on a 24/7 basis.