

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY NOVEMBER 7



Moorefield, 1985 Flood

On November 7, 1985, President Ronald Reagan declared eight West Virginia counties a disaster area as a result of devastating flooding in the region.

CSO: SS.8.14, S.6-8.L.18, ELA.8.1, ELA.8.4

Investigate the Document: (Jennings Randolph Collection Ms2017-016, Mike Greer Collection Ms2009-133)

- Use the map to answer the following about the 1985 West Virginia Flood Disaster:
 1. How many counties were considered to be “most severely hit?”
 2. How many counties were considered ‘disaster counties?’
 - Use your knowledge of West Virginia geography to answer the following. Rate the severity of each as either: Most severely hit, disaster counties, or not impacted.
 - Morgantown _____ Lewisburg _____
 - Williamstown _____ Beckley _____
 - Keyser _____ Clarksburg _____
 - Bluefield _____ Ripley _____
 - Moorefield _____ West Union _____
 3. The Public Service Commission was assigned to report on the activities of _____, _____, and _____ utilities.
 4. How many people were considered missing at the time of the report?

Think Critically: What are some ways you can prepare yourself for a flood? What are the dangers of floods? Is flooding the most frequent type of natural disaster in West Virginia? What does FEMA state in their executive summary about homeowners with flood insurance, in the aftermath of the most recent flood disaster in 2016? [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1541185743622-4dac85e81afe3034a6799d8b5b9df2bf/Region III WV FloodReport.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1541185743622-4dac85e81afe3034a6799d8b5b9df2bf/Region_III_WV_FloodReport.pdf)

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF W. VA.

Memorandum

TO: Michael D. Greer, Chairman
Charlotte R. Lane, Commissioner
Otis D. Casto, Commissioner

DATE: November 12, 1985

FROM: Howard M. Cunningham
Executive Secretary *HMC*

SUBJECT

UPDATE ON FLOOD CONDITIONS/ACTIVITIES

As you know since Friday, November 8, 1985, I have been coordinating the Commission's activities relating to the recent flood in West Virginia, and have been attending meetings daily since Friday with representatives of other state agencies and the Office of Emergency Services. Late yesterday this group was designated as the 'Governor's Special Action Group.' By this memorandum I intend to bring you up-to-date on what's happening insofar as utilities are concerned and what's being done by other state agencies in the affected areas.

As of this date 29 counties have been official declared disaster areas by President Reagan. These counties are: Barbour, Berkeley, Braxton, Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hardy, Harrison, Jefferson, Lewis, Marion, Mineral, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur and Webster.

The Commission has been assigned the task of reporting on activities of electric, telephone and gas utilities in the 29 counties. Water systems have been assigned the Health Department; sewer systems have been assigned the Department of Natural Resources. Since Sunday, November 10, with the assistance of Dick Gerke, Darrell McKown, Earl Melton, John Fitzpatrick and David Mathews, we have been reporting on the outages of electric, telephone and gas utilities in the affected 29 counties. As of 1:00 p.m., yesterday, November 11, 1985, approximately 937 customers were without gas; approximately 1,365 customers without electric service; and approximately 4,100 customers without telephone service. With the exception of the more heavily damaged areas, service should be restored by the end of this week or early next week. Again, with the assistance of the above Commission employees, we report our activities one time daily to the Office of Emergency Services where this information is computerized and handed to Governor Moore.

At yesterday's meeting I once again inquired as to when the 11 or 12 Commission employees who volunteered their expertise and assistance would be called, and was told this could be any time later this week.

-2-

Also, at yesterday's meeting, it was announced that the Governor had established ten Disaster Assistance Centers in the following locations:

1. Franklin Grade School, Franklin, Pendleton County
2. Petersburg Elementary School, Petersburg, Grant County
3. Moorefield High School, Moorefield, Hardy County
4. West Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, Romney, Hampshire County
5. County Court House, Parsons, Tucker County
6. Marlinton Elementary School Gym, Marlinton, Pocahontas County
7. W.Va. School of Osteopathic Medicine Gym, Lewisburg, Greenbrier County
8. Albright Elementary School, Albright, Preston County
9. Nathan Goff Armory, Clarksburg, Harrison County
10. Lewis County High School Gym, Weston, Lewis County

It is possible that an eleventh center will be established in Philippi, Barbour County. The Disaster Field Office, headed by Col. Donohoe, W.Va. State Police, is located in the Sheraton Inn, Clarksburg.

It was announced that it was anticipated that approximately 5,500 people will actually receive individual assistance grants, or about 33% of those applying. They expect approximately 9,000 people will be eligible for temporary housing for approximately 18 months. They expect the individual family grants to total \$20 million with the West Virginia share being 25% or \$5 million. The government pays 100% for temporary housing. It was also announced that as of meeting time yesterday no declaration had been signed for public assistance to local, state and county governmental agencies, including public service districts, electric and telephone cooperatives. They expect to have public assistance centers in 6 or 7 counties over the next 3 days.

Other interesting facts and comments brought up yesterday include the following:

-28 people now dead and 31 missing as of yesterday. (State Police)
-Approximately 200 buildings condemned
-404 roads were closed with 297 now reopened (DOH)
-65 bridges damaged
-Estimated cost for repairing/rebuilding roads/bridges - \$100 million.
-DNR has established 100 new disposal sites and has over 100 people in the field.
-Employment Security Commission supplying voluminous names of persons indicating interest in helping out.

