Gov. Pritzker Activates Illinois National Guard to Help Local Communities Prepare for Potential Flooding

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Springfield, IL – After consulting with local officials and experts at the National Weather Services, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency is initiating sandbagging operations to assist communities along the Illinois River with flood fighting efforts. The National Weather Service is forecasting major river flooding over the next several days for portions of the Illinois River, as well as moderate to minor flooding along nine other rivers in Illinois. To supplement the local efforts, Governor JB Pritzker has activated nearly 60 Illinois National Guard soldiers for State Active Duty to assist with the state's response efforts.

To date, four counties have declared local disaster declarations to provide the necessary resources to initiate the local flood response.Similarly, Governor JB Pritzker has issued a state disaster proclamation for Grundy, Pike, Scott and Morgan counties.The declaration will ensure state support to communities that are shoring up local levees to protect communities from rising river levels.

"I have directed all agencies in my administration to doing everything possible to help local communities prepare for and respond to the potential flood risks presented in the current forecast," **saidGovernor JB Pritzker**. "COVID-19 has altered every facet of our lives, and that includes how we respond to emergencies or disasters. Our public safety agencies are working together to provide guidelines that limit potential exposures and keep everyone safe."

The men and women called to State Active Duty will see a change in normal operations to address the COVID-19 environment.All guardsmen will be tested for COVID-19 prior to deployment into the local communities.Additionally, they will be issued PPE to

use while working in conditions where they cannot appropriately implement social distancing procedures, and they will be housed within the community to ensure the virus is not being brought into the affected communities.

According to the National Weather Service, the Illinois River at Meredosia is projected to reach major flood stage (24ft) on Saturday morning and continue to rise through mid-week.Without additional flood protective measures, several levees can overtop and roads can flood near the river. In Meredosia, the village's 980 residents could be in jeopardy of losing their homes and lives.

"Flooding kills more people each year than tornadoes, hurricanes or lightning," said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. "In the coming days, flash flooding will be a concern as we see additional precipitation fall on already saturated soils.Now is the time to take actions to protect your family and property from potential flooding."

To assist with the state's flood fighting efforts, the Department of Corrections has initiated sandbags operations at three facilities: Jacksonville, Mt. Sterling and Pittsfield. These facilities are currently free of COVID-19.While IDOC facilities remain on lockdown, protocols have been put in place to allow offenders to safely perform these critical functions.These include initiating a social distancing workflow, issuing PPE to workers and limiting the individuals coming in and out of the facility.

The Illinois Department of Transportation will be assisting local authorities by delivering truckloads of sand and filled sandbags to the affected areas.All drivers have been instructed to wear appropriate PPE while working in a flood operation environment to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Additionally, county emergency managers are working with their local health departments to put forth guidance to protect those working to build up local levees.That guidance includes daily temperature checks, implementing social distancing parameters, issuing PPE to workers, and reassigning at-risk workers to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

For additional information to help protect your family and community from flooding, visit ready.illinois.gov.