



Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

2600 LaFranier Road, Suite A
Traverse City, MI 49686
Phone: 231-995-6059 Fax: 231-995-6139

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County Continues to Assess Damage; Debris Removal a Priority

Grand Traverse County – Following Sunday’s treacherous storm, resulting in a state of emergency declared in Grand Traverse County as of yesterday, County Board of Commissioners Chair Christine Maxbauer and Emergency Management Coordinator Gregg Bird met this morning with key officials, who provided updates and discussed plans for continued cleanup.

County, city, and state officials, along with area emergency, fire, public safety, police, and power company representatives attended the meeting, and discussed the need for bringing in outside resources to assist with the effort.

Crews from power companies around the state already are helping the area’s three power providers – Traverse City Light and Power, Cherryland Electric, and Consumers Energy – restore power to over 4,500 households. According to power company officials, crews are working around the clock, and it is expected that “a good portion” of households will have power restored as early as tonight.

However, according to Bird, “This isn’t over, even when power comes back. There will be homeowner losses, business losses, and agricultural losses.”

The Sheriff’s Department reported that it has increased patrolling subdivisions without power. The Health Department is urging individuals without power who have water and/or food safety concerns to visit the County’s Environmental Health Department’s website, http://www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us/departments/health/Environmental_Health.htm, for guidelines and additional information. As a reminder, the Parks and Recreation Department has made showers at the Civic Center available to residents without power and water. Hours are between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The Road Commission continues to remove debris from the 1,200 miles of county public roads and rightaways, and requests that residents not place additional debris on curbs and public rightaways. Additional debris could impede or delay cleanup efforts. The Incorporated City of Traverse City is working on a specific schedule for brush and limb pickup, and will post that information at www.traversecity.mi.gov and on Facebook as soon as it becomes available.

In addition to restoring power, removing trees and debris is a priority. Bird explained that, as soon as the area’s collective damage assessment has been completed, area officials will make a coordinated plan for continued tree and debris removal, and seek outside assistance, as necessary.

During Wednesday's County Public Health and Safety Committee meeting at the Governmental Center at 6 p.m., Bird and Maxbauer will recommend extending the state of emergency beyond the seven-day period that began on Monday, August 3 at 10 a.m. The county has not been awarded any state or federal dollars to assist with local cleanup, and declaring a state of emergency is the first step in seeking assistance, if necessary, from the state.

Bird advises residents to beware of fraud during this time of recovery. Anyone could pose as a construction contractor credentialed or authorized by the state or a federal agency such as FEMA, he points out. "So be careful and work with your own insurance company regarding necessary repairs and tree removal on private property."

The County is working through the Michigan Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) to seek assistance with cleanup, and has requested an assessment from Team Rubicon, a non-profit group that unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams. Team Rubicon has members trained to remove large trees and debris. The team will provide its assessment within the next 24 to 36 hours, and more information will be released as it is received. Bird says he will continue to work with area officials and provide daily status reports on power restoration, cleanup efforts, and any opportunities for assistance.

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Contact: Kris Erickson, Grand Traverse County Media Contact; 231-922-4511;
kerickson@grandtraverse.org.