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Department of Environmental Protection to Provide 550 Emergency Weather Radios for Property Owners Immediately Downstream of Cannonsville Dam

Radios will improve speed and efficiency of notifying downstream residents for extreme storms, flood watches and warnings, and emergencies at DEP facilities

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced that it will provide 550 emergency weather radios to property owners immediately downstream of Cannonsville Reservoir, including portions of the Town of Deposit, Village of Deposit and Town of Sanford. The weather radios—which will be provided free of charge—will more efficiently notify downstream residents of extreme storms, flood watches and warnings, and emergencies at DEP dams that prompt the activation of an emergency action plan. Residents and elected officials asked DEP to work with their emergency response personnel to examine and improve upon existing notification procedures after the drilling of boreholes near Cannonsville Dam this summer led to a discharge of cloudy water into the West Branch Delaware River.

“This past summer, DEP heard loud and clear the requests to improve emergency notification for those living and working immediately downstream of Cannonsville Dam,” **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd** said. “These emergency weather radios will provide our neighbors with the capability to receive alerts quickly at any time of day or night, for practically any kind of emergency.”

“The Town of Deposit, along with the Village of Deposit and the Town of Sanford, continue to work with DEP on improving methods for early alerts to residents below the dam so they may react safely to any announced threat of flooding,” **Town of Deposit Supervisor Thomas Axtell** said. “These emergency radios strengthen the ability of residents to respond to those threats.”

“I appreciate everything that DEP is doing now to try to protect our citizens,” **Town of Sanford Supervisor Dewey Decker** said. “This summer was quite a scare, but I think sometimes it takes something like that to wake everyone up. As a result, I think communication between the city, state and our local communities is better than it ever has been.”

“I am thankful for the strong working relationship that the staff at DEP has strived to not only initiate, but maintain throughout the incident this summer at their Cannonsville location,” **Village of Deposit Mayor Robert Rynearson Jr.** said. “The issuing of the weather radios is a great example of how this organization is really making an effort to improve the communities that neighbor their reservoirs. I have faith that these efforts will continue into the future.”

The weather radios will be distributed to those who own property in federally

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designated floodplains, or in the inundation zone identified in the Cannonsville Dam Emergency Action Plan. Maps of that inundation area can be found on the DEP website by [clicking here](#). These maps can also be found at the offices of local town or village clerks.

The radios will be available beginning on Monday, Nov. 23. Residents of the Town of Deposit can get their radios during business hours at the town clerk’s office, located at 3 Elm St., Deposit, N.Y. Residents of the Village of Deposit and the Town of Sanford can get their radios during business hours at the village clerk’s office, located at 146 Front St., Deposit, N.Y. Those interested in getting a weather radio are asked to bring a form of ID that includes their address, to ensure the radios are delivered to those who will most benefit from them. The radios come with simple programming instructions. Recipients are encouraged to program their radios immediately upon receiving them to ensure they are receiving a signal from the nearest radio tower. In addition, the manufacturer advises radio owners to replace the batteries in their radios at least every three years.

The emergency weather radios stay in a stand-by mode 24 hours a day until they receive a broadcast from nearby radio towers. The radios are capable of broadcasting alerts for many emergencies, including extreme storms such as blizzards and hurricanes, floods watches or warnings, Amber Alerts, and local law enforcement notices. In the case of an emergency at any of its dams, DEP’s 24-hour control center would first call the National Weather Service (NWS). In turn, NWS would quickly broadcast an emergency message that is prepared ahead of time. That broadcast would activate the weather radios and inform downstream residents.

The incident at Cannonsville Dam in July would not have triggered such a NWS alert because the discharge of cloudy water never threatened the structural integrity of the dam, and therefore it did not trigger activation of the dam’s Emergency Action Plan. However, DEP has noted that its personnel would not hesitate to activate the plan and broadcast an alert for any dam in the future if an unexplainable condition appeared or the structural integrity of a dam was compromised.

During and after the incident at Cannonsville, DEP held many meetings with local elected officials, downstream residents and business owners, and emergency management experts from counties and states that border the Delaware River. DEP’s emergency planning staff continue to meet with emergency managers from the states and counties that border the Delaware River and its tributaries downstream of DEP facilities. During these meetings, DEP was asked to collaborate with local officials and examine ways to improve the speed and efficiency of emergency notification for the communities immediately downstream of the dam. The emergency weather radios, which were tested throughout Deposit to ensure they would receive an adequate signal, emerged as a method for improving notification speed in those communities.

Background

In July, DEP responded to a report of cloudy water being discharged into the West Branch Delaware River, just downstream of Cannonsville Dam. The discharge was discovered as workers drilled test borings to support the design and construction of a hydroelectric facility that was planned for the site. An investigation found that the drilling released groundwater under natural pressure, known as an artesian condition, several dozen feet below the surface. As the pressurized groundwater flowed upward it also carried sediment into the river. At the time, DEP increased its downstream releases and drinking water diversions from Cannonsville Reservoir for roughly three weeks out of an abundance of caution for public safety.

Materials testing, engineering analyses and instrumentation inside Cannonsville Dam showed that the structural integrity of the dam was never compromised by the transport of that sediment downstream. Federal, state, county and local

officials—including officials from New Jersey and Pennsylvania—were regularly updated during the incident and while repairs were happening at the site. Repairs were completed by expert geotechnical engineers in late August. Testing through mid-September found that the repair work was successful. During and after the incident, DEP hosted more than 20 meetings with elected officials, downstream residents and business owners, and emergency response personnel to keep them apprised of the situation and progress on the repairs.

Placed into service in 1964, Cannonsville Reservoir was the last of New York City’s 19 reservoirs to be built. Water diverted from Cannonsville Reservoir for drinking water enters the West Delaware Tunnel and travels 44 miles to the upper end of Rondout Reservoir. From there, it is carried in the 85-mile-long Delaware Aqueduct. Water is released downstream from Cannonsville Reservoir under the terms of the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court Decree, and a flow program, known as the Flexible Flow Management Program, agreed upon by New York City and the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City’s water supply system. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and other professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with nearly \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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