



**Governor's Office of
Homeland Security &
Emergency Preparedness**

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**State Officials Advise Public to Stay Off of
Levees, Remain Safe During Flood
Conditions**

BATON ROUGE, La. - As area spillways are opened in an effort to relieve pressure on levee systems, state officials today cautioned residents that state law prohibits driving on levees and parking on shoulders of roadways. In addition to motorists exposing themselves to hazardous conditions from rising water levels, vehicles driven on top of levees can cause damage to levee infrastructures and obstruct official vehicles.

Department of Transportation and Development Secretary Sherri H. LeBas warns, "By driving on our levees, citizens are undermining the stability of our levee system and interfering with flood prevention work. Additionally, given the height and speed of the water, it is extremely dangerous to be so close to the river."

Louisiana State Police along with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries will be patrolling affected areas throughout the state for potentially dangerous situations and motorists and/or boaters creating a hazard.

LDWF Lt. Col. Jeff Mayne states, "As the rivers continue to rise and flood waters are expected in certain areas we urge everyone to put safety first, high river levels and flood waters can be extremely dangerous, please exercise extreme caution."

If members of the public observe unsafe drivers or situations, they are urged to call *LSP (*577) and report this activity to the nearest State Police office. For information on road construction or detours, please use the motorist information system and dial "511" or visit www.lsp.org.

Motorists are reminded to follow the following safety guidelines when encountering flooded roadways:

- Do not drive through flooded areas. If you come across a flooded road, turn around and find another route to your destination. Do not drive around barricades.
- Do not try to cross flooded roads where the water appears to be shallow. Water hides dips in the road. Worse yet, there may be no road at all under the water.
- If your car stalls, abandon it and climb to higher ground. Wait for the waters to subside.
- One foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger vehicles, causing drivers to lose control of the car or possible stalling.
- Two feet of rushing water can sweep away most vehicles, including pick-up trucks and SUVs.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.

With the potential of floodwaters affecting residential communities, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals offers the following safety guidelines:

- There is always the possibility that flooding will cause sewage treatment systems (both community and residential) to fail, contaminating the floodwaters and exposing people to disease-causing bacteria.
- Wading in the water could pose a health risk if it enters the body through an exposed wound.
- If you have been in contact with floodwaters, showering with soap and water is sufficient. There is no risk for hepatitis A, typhoid or cholera.
- Be on the lookout for dangerous wildlife in the floodwaters such as snakes, rats, alligators or any frightened animal. If you see wild animals, stay away.
- Do not drink or ingest floodwater because it may contain disease-causing bacteria or viruses.
- If you live in an area that has experienced recent flooding and your private water well has lost power or been contaminated by floodwater, boil the water before drinking it.
- Assume everything touched by floodwater is contaminated with bacteria and will have to be disinfected. People are advised to wash their hands frequently during cleanup and always wear rubber gloves.

LDWF personnel will be available to respond to situations involving wildlife species that move into populated areas or become stranded by high water.

For assistance with the removal of black bears that may be forced into populated areas by flood waters, call 1-800-442-2511 toll free.

For assistance with any other wildlife issues, within the Mississippi Alluvial Valley flood plain, call one of the following LDWF Field Offices: Monroe, ph. 318-343-4044; Opelousas, ph. 337-948-0255; Pineville, ph. 318-487-5885; Hammond, ph. 985-543-4777; and New Iberia, ph. 337-373-0032.

The public is directed not to feed stranded wildlife and avoid disturbance of wildlife displaced by flood waters.

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