

# Illinois Flood History

## 2007 Midwest Flooding: Illinois

The city of Rockford, Illinois was deluged in the weeks preceding the major flooding during the third week of August. On August 7, 2007, Rockford was hit by five to seven inches (127&ndash;178 mm) of rain. Many streets, including main thoroughfares, were flooded. There was also fear that the Alpine Dam might break. The following day, Governor Rod Blagojevich declared both Rockford and Winnebago County a state disaster area. With this declaration, he dispatched both the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to assist the city. Debris removal, law enforcement, damage assessment, and other physical assistance were offered by the governor.

About two weeks later, following quick, violent storms on August 23 that came through most of the Chicago metropolitan area, Governor Rod Blagojevich declared McHenry, Lake, Cook (including Chicago), DuPage, and Kane counties to be disaster areas. Though not affected by flooding as it was on August 7, the city of Rockford received 1.23 inches (31 mm) of rain, setting an all time record for Rockford's wettest month in recorded climate data history, with a total of 13.82 inches (351 mm) of rain.[12] The storm shut down airports (including O'Hare International Airport and Midway International Airport), uprooted trees and left over 600,000 residents in northern Illinois without power, some for several days. It also caused flooding on streets and major expressways. Wind gusts registered as high as 80 miles per hour (130 km/h) in the area, with the highest being reported in Manhattan. A small tornado was also reported in Bolingbrook in a Dupage County Forest Preserve. Rainfall totals in Boone and LaSalle Counties topped 1987 records. Flooding across northern Illinois was widespread in the aftermath of the storms. Along the Rock River in Byron, the river reached moderate flood stage on August 24; moderate stage is above 14 feet (4 m). Officials in Ogle County recommended that people in low-lying areas along the Rock River, and along Killbuck Creek near Lindenwood, evacuate to higher ground. Downstream, in Lee County at Dixon, the river had not reached flood stage as of August 25, though it continued to rise.

Other rivers and streams in the Rock River valley experienced moderate to major flooding as well. The Kishwaukee River at Perryville crested at 17.57 feet (5.36 m), more than five feet above flood stage. The same river also rose above flood stage in Belvidere. After 4.85 inches (123 mm) of rain fell on August 23 and 24 in DeKalb County, at DeKalb, the Kishwaukee rose to its highest level since 1983 and its second highest level in recorded history. Numerous roads and bridges were closed, and the cities of DeKalb and Sycamore declared local emergencies, though DeKalb County was not included in Blagojevich's initial disaster declaration. DeKalb County received state disaster area designation from Blagojevich on August 26. In DeKalb and Sycamore, about 600 residents were displaced from their homes, and the DeKalb campus of Northern Illinois University was closed because of the flood.

The Fox River at Dayton crested after it rose to more than 17 feet (5 m), over five feet above the river's flood stage. In Plano, Illinois the Fox rose up around the historic Farnsworth House, a modern architecture masterpiece designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Preservationists used a boat to save the home and its furnishings, which previously had been devastated by high water in 1996. With the boat, preservationists were able to enter the house and move vulnerable furnishings to higher locations within the home. Water rose to within a foot of the Farnsworth House's raised platform, covering the terrace in front of the home, but the river crested before any damage occurred. At Starved Rock State Park, parking lots were closed due to the level of the Illinois River, which stood at 26.5 feet on August 25, 6.5 feet (2 m) above its flood stage.

Governor Blagojevich estimated total flood damages could cost nine Illinois counties and the state more than \$22.8 million, and the state requested federal assistance. On September 25, FEMA announced that federal disaster aid was available for the state of Illinois to assist with recovery from the August storms. The disaster aid was made available

when President George W. Bush declared DeKalb, Grundy, Kane, LaSalle, Lake, and Will Counties, in northern Illinois, "major disaster" areas. The federal funding made individual assistance available to flood victims in Lake, Will and Grundy Counties, and individual and public assistance available to those in DeKalb, Kane and LaSalle Counties.