

Rhode Island Flood History

Flood Events from 1950 to 2004

Location

Date

Type

Property Damage

Precip Amount

Comments

Statewide

3/30/93 – 4/2/93

Coastal, riverine & urban flooding

N/A

N/A

Blackstone crested at 1 foot below flood stage, flooding from Pawtuxet River onto Woodbury Ave, Wellington and Marine Rd in Cranston, flooding in Natic section of West Warwick, flooding in Charlestown from Pawcatuck River

Statewide

1/28/1996

Coastal, riverine & urban flooding

N/A

2”

Heavy winds & rainfall combined with low temps and snow melt

Statewide

4/17/1996

Coastal, riverine & urban flooding

N/A

N/A

Heavy rains combined with snow melt , ground saturated. Blackstone crested above one foot flood stage, Paxtuxet crested above flood stage

Statewide

10/21/1996

Riverine & urban flooding

N/A

N/A

Slow moving Nor'easter, brought heavy rain and winds. Blackstone crested .3 foot above flood stage

Newport Tiverton, Portsmouth, Barrington, Providence

1/10/1997

Coastal storm surge

N/A

N/A

High moon tides and heavy winds created 2-4" storm surge levels. Water came within one foot of topping the hurricane barrier, some coastal roads flooded out in other communities

Statewide

8/29/1997

Coastal, riverine & urban flooding

N/A

3 - 6"

Slow moving front, heavy rain fell within 2 hours

Statewide

1/24/1998

Coastal, riverine & urban flooding

N/A

3.5" in 12 hours

Pocasset River overflow banks by 2 feet

Central and southeast

2/18/1998

Dam breach, riverine flooding

\$400,000

3.5" in 12 hours

Dam break in S.Kingstown, extensive basement flooding in SE, Maidford River overflowed banks in Middletown

Statewide

3/10/1998

Riverine & urban flooding

\$50,000

2 - 4" in 30 hours

flooding, basement flooding, and river flooding, Blackstone flooded over 3 feet in Woonsocket and Cumberland

Statewide

6/13/1998

Coastal, riverine & urban flooding

N/A

7 - 8"

Slow moving storm with heavy rains, Ponaganset Pond flooded over in Glocester & Foster, Woonasquatucket hit flood stage in N. Providence, Pawtuxet went beyond flood stage in Warwick, Blackstone hit flood stage

Statewide
6/30/1998
Riverine & urban flooding
N/A
3-6" in 8 hours
Louquisset River flooded out of banks, Woonasquatucket River flooded banks in Smithfield and N. Providence, Ponganset flooded and Pawtuxet River flooded

Johnston
8/26/1999
Riverine flooding
N/A
4-6" in 2 hours
Series of thunderstorms heavy rains, Pocasset River overflowed, severe urban street flooding, bridge over Pocasset damaged

Statewide
9/10/1999
Riverine flooding
N/A
5-7" rain
Woonasquatucket River out of banks

Statewide
9/16/1999
Coastal, riverine & urban flooding
N/A
Up to 8"
Pawtuxet River rose out of banks in Cranston and Warwick

Cranston
4/22/2000
Riverine & urban flooding
N/A
3" in
Pawtuxet River flooding in Cranston, some roads covered by 12 inches of water

6 - 12 hours

Cranston
3/22/2001
Riverine & urban flooding
\$3 million affecting 1,400 homes and 147 businesses
N/A
Heavy rainfall combined with melting snow. Blackstone at Woonsocket crested and Pawtuxet River crested in Cranston

Statewide
3/30/2001
Riverine & urban flooding
N/A
3 - 5"
Renewed flooding to already saturated areas. Blackstone, Pawtuxet Rivers surpassed flood stages

Glocester
5/29/2001
Stormwater flooding
N/A

2” in 1 hour
Road washout on Route 102

Statewide

6/17/2001

flooding

N/A

5-7”

washouts in Foster from runoff, building foundations washed out from runoff in Coventry

Statewide

4/14/2004

Urban & Stormwater flooding

N/A

2-4”

Accumulated rain over past week caused Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers to hit flood stages. Roadways in low lying areas flooded

Urban/Stormwater Flooding The flood of March 1968 constitutes the record flood for much of the state, except for main-stem flooding along the Blackstone River in August 1955 and local flooding along headwater streams in the Pawtuxet and Pawcatuck Basins in November 1927, January 1964, February 1965, and August 1967. The March 1968 flood resulted from heavy rainfall that followed a period of sustained snowmelt which had caused stream flows to be much above normal. The August 1955 flood, which caused a record flooding along the main rivers in the Blackstone River Basin in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and the Thames River Basin (predominantly in Connecticut), resulted from torrential rainfall accompanying Hurricane Diane. Damages from the 1955 flood were estimated at approximately \$28 million for the state, with the Woonsocket area hardest hit in Rhode Island. Except for a small local protection project at Blackstone, Massachusetts, there were no federal flood control projects in operation at the time of the flood. Subsequently two projects in Rhode Island - for Upper and Lower Woonsocket - and two in Massachusetts, were constructed for Blackstone River Basin flood protection. The U.S. Corps of Engineers estimates that these projects prevented about \$8 million in damages in the flood of March 1968. The rivers of the Narragansett Bay Drainage Basin are susceptible not only to storms of local origin and continental storms borne by the "prevailing westerlies" but also to coastal storms and hurricanes of tropical origin. The situation is somewhat different for the Pawcatuck River Basin in southwestern Rhode Island. The Corps of Engineers observed in 1981 that, "River flooding has not been a major problem to date, as the vast amount of swampland within the basin has made for very slow flood formation with only minor flood peaks." In the past decade and continuing today, communities in the Pawcatuck River Basin have been and are forecast to continue to experience significant development pressure that, if not appropriately controlled, could seriously affect the water-absorbing capacity of the land that has minimized flooding in the area to date. Repeated flooding in certain inland areas of the state has required various site-specific hazard mitigation measures. Most dramatic in scope, to date, was the situation in the Belmont Park section of the city of Warwick. Flooding occurred most recently in January 1979 when a combination of above-normal temperatures and rainfall caused the Pawtuxet River to overflow its banks, inundating about 30 acres of land in the Belmont Park area, a residential section built in and adjacent to a flood hazard area. Flooding had worsened with increased upstream development. To prevent repeated flooding, some 60 homes were purchased and demolished. Currently, frequent flooding of the Pawtuxet River in the Natick Flats section between Warwick and West Warwick has occasioned investigation of potential flood control measures by the Corps of Engineers.

Urban flooding has been a recurrent problem in Providence, Pawtucket, North Providence, West Warwick and densely developed sections of other cities and towns. Urban flooding involves the overflow of storm sewer systems and is usually caused by inadequate drainage following heavy rain or rapid snowmelt. Attention to reducing or delaying storm runoff can help to mitigate such flooding.

Location of Coastal Erosion-related Flooding Past attempts to seek FEMA funding on this issue have been refused with the explanation that FEMA does not fund coastal erosion studies. Alternate sources of funding such as the State Coastal Program or even NOAA have been unavailable as the funding for those agencies have experienced severe funding cuts. It is hoped that funding could become available to complete a statewide assessment of the impact of coastal erosion, particularly since Rhode Island has the most densely developed coastline in the country (for its size). Why wait - get your Rhode Island Flood Insurance today and protect your family.