



The Chairman's Corner

by

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FLOOD MITIGATION PROGRAM

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Earlier this year, Columbia County and Columbia County Emergency Management were notified by the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) that the county was in line to participate in a new Flood Mitigation Equipment program.

“It’s my understanding that Columbia County Emergency Management and Greene County Emergency Management were approached as the first counties in the state to discuss and potentially participate in the program,” said county Emergency Management Director David Harrison. “It is also my understanding that in time the program will be offered to all counties in New York State.”

The new equipment will be shipped directly to the county Department of Public Works facility on Route 23B. County DPW can then use/send the equipment to substations throughout the county as needed.

“The only cost will be for maintenance, repair, and to insure the equipment,” said Director Harrison. “The county, as it already does, would respond to requests for assistance by municipalities relating to flood emergencies and mitigation. The county may also be requested by the state to assist in an adjoining county if so needed.”

Included in the list of equipment scheduled to be delivered to DPW are six pumps and a number of pump accessories; a sandbag filler, 10,000 empty sandbags, and a sandbag trailer; a portable water tanker; four chainsaws; two generators; two light towers; and two message boards.

Columbia County Emergency Management Office is a busy, part-time department of five that prepares for the worst and hopes for the best while remaining available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Much of its work is done in the background.

The department is led by former county sheriff David W. Harrison, Jr., and staffed by deputy directors Henry Swartz, Rob Lopez, Mark Van Vorst, and Bill Hilscher. Warren Dorsch and Rudolph Visser serve as Chaplains and Spiritual Leader liaisons.

For those unfamiliar with DHSES, the agency provides leadership, coordination, and support to prevent, protect against, prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate disasters and other emergencies, the agency states on its website.

DHSES accomplishes this core mission through its support units, including Counter Terrorism, Emergency Management, Fire Prevention and Control, Interoperable & Emergency Communications, Disaster Recovery, and Administration & Finance, which coordinate the response of state agencies in support of local government.

The people of DHSES are dedicated to working closely on a daily basis with all levels of government, the private sector, and volunteer organizations to improve the readiness and response capabilities of communities throughout the state.

Columbia County welcomes the opportunity to participate in this new program. As we are all aware, flooding and other natural disasters tend to be occurring more frequently and with the potential for more devastating results than in our past. The Flood Mitigation Equipment provided through the DSHSES program is a definite boost to local readiness in the face of potential future needs.