



# correctional **Newsfront**

## Earthquake, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee

*DOC deals with several emergencies in short period of time*  
By Susan McNaughton, Press Secretary

In the matter of several weeks in August and September 2011, the state was faced with an earthquake, Hurricane Irene and remnants of Tropical Storm Lee.

During the earthquake, which was centered in a Virginia town, it seemed that most everyone on the East Coast felt the tumbler. However, SCI Muncy, which is located in Lycoming County and opened in the early 1900s, actually suffered some limited structural damage to its administration building, which has since been repaired.

Later, the East Coast braced itself for Hurricane Irene. The DOC was prepared and manned its area command as the worst of the storm barreled down on Pennsylvania.

The worst was yet to come, however, as Tropical Storm Lee inched its way up the coast seeming to take its time over Pennsylvania, where record rainfall was experienced. Flooding, that was compared to but not as severe as the flooding experienced in 1972 with Hurricane Agnes, paralyzed the state. Roads were severely damaged and/or blocked and creeks, streams and rivers overflowed their banks thanks to Lee.

Lee resulted in impassible roads, causing employees problems as they tried to go to work or to go home from work. At SCI Retreat, which only is accessible via a bridge, staff was prepared to "defend in place" as they watched the Susquehanna River continue to rise to a point where the bridge could not be used. Staff stayed overnight at the prison to ensure its operation.

"This was the first time since the prison opened in 1988 that anyone has seen the river rise to this level," Superintendent James McGrady said. "One thing the storm did accomplish was renewing a sense of camaraderie among staff."

McGrady noted that the prison suffered minor mudslides, flooded buildings and loss of power for 26 hours requiring the relocation of 282 inmates from the modular unit to another area of the prison.

(Continued on Page 2)

### In This Issue...

Secretary Talks About Staff Response.....	2
Tropical Storm Lee Didn't Stop Laundry.....	3
CWP Assisting with Flood Clean Up.....	5
Clean Up Efforts Flood Senses.....	7
AlertPA.....	8

(Continued from Page 1)

SCI Muncy, in Lycoming County, was not untouched by Lee. The prison was operating on limited electrical power and no boiler. The towns surrounding the prison also experienced severe flooding, but staff prevailed and reported to work without any major incidents.



SCI Retreat's bridge - the main route in and out of the prison - was flooded.

Northumberland County experienced flooding and road closures, which put SCI Coal Township on alert, as staff also was having difficulty traveling to work, but again, employees pulled together to maintain operation. In fact, the prison was called upon by county prison officials. Due to flooding, the county prison requested to evacuate its male inmates to SCI Coal Township. They also sent about 30 females to SCI Muncy.

In the Harrisburg area, the state's capital, DOC officials decided to evacuate the community corrections center located on Cameron Street. This low-lying area has been prone to flooding over the years. Residents were successfully relocated to county prisons in Dauphin and Lebanon.

In Berks County, the Wernersville Community Corrections Center experienced power outages and basement flooding. However, the residents were not evacuated.

Throughout Lee the DOC worked with the state's Emergency Operation Center to provide resources, such as generators and lights, to those in need.

Deputy Secretary Michael Klopotoski, whose region was affected most by Lee, commended staff for their work. "Our employees responded quickly and professionally," Klopotoski said. "I am very proud of everyone."

Recently Corrections Secretary John Wetzel visited Wernersville CCC to see the impact of Lee for himself. "While you really couldn't see anything now, it was quite an event," Wetzel said. "As a department, we responded very well to the situation."

(Continued from Page 2)

Now the cleanup efforts are underway across the state. And to help with those efforts are state prison inmates and the DOC's community work program. Inmates from SCI Coal Township are helping to clean sewer drains. SCI Dallas inmates are assisting a local shelter moving food and water from one shelter to another. Muncy's inmates will be returning to Sonestown and Muncy to help out as needed. SCI Waymart also will be sending their inmate work crews out to assist with clean up efforts.



An example of a flood-damaged roadway in Berks County, north-west of Wernersville. Photo courtesy of PennDOT District 5-0.

The events of the past several weeks show that the DOC plans for everything and often is called upon by other agencies for assistance. Let's hope we get a break before another natural disaster happens. But if it does, know that we are ready.

### Secretary Wetzel Talks About... The DOC's Response to Tropical Storm Lee

#### Newsfront

Volume XXXVI, No. 6, 2011

Newsfront is published by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections' Press Office, P.O. Box 598, Camp Hill, Pa.

ADMINISTRATION

**TOMCORBETT**  
Governor

**John E. Wetzel**  
Secretary

**Susan McNaughton**  
Press Secretary/Editor

**Susan Bensinger**  
Deputy Press Secretary/Writer

www.cor.state.pa.us

One thing that never fails to amaze me, as I continue my journey as corrections secretary, is the professionalism and dedication of our staff.

Corrections is a field that is tight knit. Our employees take care of each other. But our employees also take care of their communities. This was evidenced recently during and following the spate of natural disasters that hit Pennsylvania. Our employees and inmates took to the local communities to help those who suffered flooding by cleaning up afterward.

I am proud of DOC employees. Their compassion is great, and this issue of "Correctional Newsfront" shows that our agency is prepared to work with others during and after an emergency.



# Tropical Storm Lee Didn't Stop Laundry

*PCI Comes to the Aid of Sister Agencies*

Wernersville State Hospital processes laundry for their patients as well as those at the Hamburg Center and Norristown State Hospital. When Wernersville State Hospital was evacuated due to Tropical Storm Lee, the Hamburg Center and Norristown State Hospital were unable to have their laundry cleaned.

As a result, officials from the Norristown State Hospital contacted Pennsylvania Correctional Industries to set up an emergency laundry service.

PCI's laundry operation at SCI Retreat was not operational due to the high flood waters that prison was experiencing. At the same time PCI was attempting to pick up laundry from SCI Muncy, the call from Norristown came in.

PCI staff worked to accommodate both Muncy and Norristown and reached out to the Hamburg Center since they were aware of the issues that center was facing. Shortly thereafter, Wernersville State Hospital also contacted PCI for laundry services.

Muncy's laundry, along with laundry from Hamburg and Norristown, was handled by SCI Frackville's newly-opened laundry facility. The laundry from Wernersville was shipped to SCI Somerset's PCI laundry. In order to accommodate the extra items, PCI ran extra shifts over that weekend. Also, SCI Somerset staff relieved SCI Frackville's staff and delivered Norristown's first clean laundry load by that Sunday.

"The response from PCI was so much more than we expected," said Cathy Di Christofaro, Norristown State Hospital purchasing agent. "We are so pleased and grateful. I want to thank everyone involved for coming to our aid so quickly."

In addition to assisting sister agencies with laundry services, PCI also arranged through PEMA for PCI staff from SCIs Houtzdale, Mahanoy and Rockview to drive trailers to National Guard staff at Fort Indiantown Gap who would then deliver emergency water and food supplies to northeastern Pennsylvania.

"I am proud of our staff for going the extra mile every day," said PCI Director Anthony Miller. "Today, I'm just a little more proud than usual."



A DOC inmate doing laundry at one of PCI's laundry operations.

## Assisting with Flood Clean Up

SCI Coal Township sent inmates from its community work program out into Northumberland County along Rt. 61 to assist with clean up efforts. The road was flooded from one side to the other during the storm, and it wasn't opened until Sept. 12.

SCI Camp Hill inmates worked to clean up Harrisburg's City Island.

Crews from SCI Dallas were asked to pick up water and food from a local elementary school and deliver them to flood victims in Pittston and Duryea.

Inmates from SCI Muncy assisted local communities as they recovered from flooding.

SCI Waymart also sent its inmate work crews to Duryea to assist with clean-up efforts.

Community Corrections Center inmates also are required to perform community service. After Hurricane Irene, they helped to clean up debris left behind by the storm.



# Clean Up Efforts Flood Senses

By Terri Fazio  
SCI Waymart School Principal

Most everyone, by now, has seen TV stories about the floods in the Luzerne County area. While watching these news segments, you can't help but be moved by the destruction and devastation that occurred.

I was one of these people, and then I went to take some pictures of our Community Work Detail helping out in Duryea. I just want to say that what I felt after leaving there was just shock and amazement. I grew up on the Lackawanna River, and my family was truly lucky that we had never had the river rise and flood our home.

SCI Waymart's inmate crew was working two blocks from the river, and the amount of water and mud (among other things) that came through people's homes was astronomical. When you are standing outside of a house and looking at water lines that are more than half-way up the first floor windows, you think, "Wow, look at how high that water went!" But, you have to realize that it came in through doors and windows and anywhere else it could find its way in, and that water mark is also on the inside of the houses.

As we walked closer to the river, those water marks just got higher and higher until some houses had water on their second floors. In this area we also saw several homes that had been shifted off of their foundations. The families could not get back in due to the risk of collapse.

We were also affected by the smells left behind by all of the wet (can't even call it damp) debris, carpeting, furniture and insulation. I don't see how that smell would ever leave. I watched heirloom pieces of furniture being crushed, bedding and clothing just tossed on the sidewalks, children's toys broken and filthy as well as hundreds and thousands of other items.

Everywhere you looked stood piles of "garbage." This "garbage" is really all of the belongings of these families that may have been in their basements or on their first floors. All they could do was haul it to the curb. Very few items were actually salvageable. Our work detail was helping to clean these piles and load it into large pay loaders that would then dump it into huge dump trucks. When you turned to look down the street, it was just dump truck after dump truck after dump truck. The side streets were impassable because those streets started out as the central areas for collection but there was just too much.



So the dump trucks had to start hauling straight from the streets.

What was also heartbreaking was watching some of these people looking at what was obviously a lifetime of memories and valuables just being tossed aside. Most put on a brave face and realized that these were just material items and no lives were lost. They were very grateful for the small amount of help that our details were able to provide.

It was also eye-opening to watch the inmates and gauge their reactions. Most of these guys have been working on the details for some time and are used to painting church halls, cleaning playgrounds or picking trash along the highways. This was the first time any of them had actually had the opportunity to really help people following a natural disaster. They just kept right on going. They never complained and asked if there were other areas that might need our help. One of the guys said that for the first time since his incarceration, he finally began to feel like he might be paying a small part of his debt back to society.

As I was going down the street, I came upon some National Guard troops at a corner residence. When I came around the side of the house, I realized that an entire wall of the foundation had been washed away. The residents of the home were being allowed in to see what they could salvage and move it before it became any more dangerous to be in there. As I looked at the individuals, I realized that I recognized one gentleman but couldn't put my finger on where. When he turned and looked at us, he asked, "Waymart?" And then I realized, "Dallas!" Here was a fellow DOC employee and this was his apartment. And since I have been down there, I have learned of so many more of our fellow DOC employees that also fell victim to this flood.

As we left to return to our "normal" existence, I felt so down hearted and wondered how anyone could find the strength and fortitude to get through this. I am amazed at how well the people were adjusting and moving forward. The power of the river is awesome and can be beautiful at times, but as I saw, it can also be one of nature's most destructive instruments. It is not enough to say that you are sorry for their losses or that you wish them the best of luck in their recovery. I realize that many of them will never totally recover from such an incident, and it will take all of us working together to help them put some semblance of their lives back together.





Beginning Oct. 1, 2011, the Department of Corrections switched from its previous emergency notification system to AlertPA. Have you registered yet? You can be notified on your home phone, cell phone and via e-mail and/or text messaging.

***You select the method ... you stay informed.***

---

## How AlertPA Keeps Me Notified

By Susan McNaughton, Press Secretary

During Tropical Storm Lee, AlertPA sent me e-mail and text notifications about...

- severe thunderstorm watches and warnings
- flash flooding watches and warnings
- county wide emergency declarations
- state office closures

And more recently, while traveling out of state, I received a text about a severe thunderstorm in my hometown area. I was able to call home and warn my sons about the storm about to hit their area. So, while I wasn't even in the affected area, I was kept informed and able to relay important information to those who were.

So, you may be wondering ... does AlertPA do more than just weather notifications.

Yes! Obviously the DOC uses it to inform those who registered about prison emergencies. Luckily we haven't had to use it for that reason, but if we do, I will be notified because I have signed up for notifications from EVERY state prison in Pennsylvania.

But AlertPA also informs registered individuals about public health issues, Amber Alerts, airport notifications, disaster emergency proclamations, national notifications such as recalls and product safety, revenue tax notifications and more.

Check it out! Go to <https://alert.pa.gov> and register today!