



**OSWEGO COUNTY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE**

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‘State of Emergency’ raises awareness, opens door for assistance

A “State of Emergency” declared in Oswego County heightens awareness to emergency conditions and opens a door to possible state assistance. It is a signal to people in the county to use extreme caution and pay attention to local conditions, but does not restrict their movements by itself.

The declaration is made by the Chairman of the Oswego County Legislature, the chief elected official in the county. It is a precursor to prerogatives the chief elected official may choose to take to protect life and property. The declaration is promulgated by the Director of the Oswego County Emergency Management Office, who provides advice and assistance to the legislature chairman during emergencies.

A “State of Emergency” differs from a “snow emergency” and travel restrictions in that no limitations on people’s movement is ordered. People should use extreme caution and common sense whenever a State of Emergency is declared. But the State of Emergency itself does not mean people can’t travel, go to work or school.

The State of Emergency is in accordance with New York State Executive Law Article 2-B, which outlines the actions a chief elected official of a municipality can take when a dangerous situation that places the public at risk is imminent or present. It states:

“Emergency conditions exist that threaten public safety. (The Chief Elected Official) render(s) all required and available assistance vital to the security, well-being, and health of the citizens of this municipality . . . and directs all departments and agencies, including emergency services, to take whatever steps are necessary to protect lives and property, public infrastructure and provide such emergency assistance deemed necessary.”

If specific actions to protect the public are necessary – for example, restricting travel on local roads to emergency vehicles only or establishing a curfew so people are not traveling after dark – they are done through “Local Emergency Orders” issued by the Chief Elected Official.

No emergency orders were issued during the 2007 Lake Effect Storm, the 2004 snowstorm, or during the April 2003 Ice Storm. Other counties in New York State have issued them in the past, such as Jefferson County during the North Country Ice Storm of 1998. Travel advisories issued by the county mean only that motorists should take extreme caution when traveling in affected areas, as hazardous conditions exist.

A county declaration of State of Emergency also does not supercede local States of Emergency. Often the declarations are in tandem, as they were in the snowstorm and Ice Storm. Local municipalities, including cities, villages and towns, are the first responders to an emergency.

Once local resources are depleted, the county provides assistance. When the county's resources are stretched to the limit and a State of Emergency is in effect, the county may request help from New York State.

The Oswego County Emergency Management Office asked the state for help during the snowstorm when the cities were overburdened and the county had no resources left to help them. In that case, the State Emergency Management Office and the State Department of Transportation worked with the county to bring state DOT snow-removal equipment to Oswego and Fulton.

New York State Executive Law Article 2-B can be found on the homepage of the State Emergency Management Office, www.semo.state.ny.us. More information locally is available by calling the Oswego County Emergency Management Office at 315/591-9150.