

# Environmental Emergency Services, Inc.

## Chemung & Steuben Counties, NY



**Tuscarora Creek in Addison, September 9, 2004**

## 2004 Annual Report

# **ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY SERVICES, INC.**

## **2004 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **TO OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS**

I want to express my personal thanks to all the people who make this organization the success that we have come to accept and expect. We are supported by Steuben and Chemung Counties, as well as numerous Cities, Towns, and Villages that truly are the financial backbone of this organization. We have been fortunate in recent years to receive grant funding for special projects such as the NOAA Weather Radio receiver distribution to special needs populations and National Weather Service funding for gauge replacement. All of this support allows the Board of Directors and the volunteers to provide information and services to the community.

As I write this annual report, I am looking back on a very wet year. We started with very wet weather and some limited flooding in the spring. Late summer and fall became one of the most active tropical weather seasons, which resulted in a number of rainfall events. Each event had it's own character. The heavy rainfall of late August in the Curtis Hollow area resulted in some major flash flooding. The flood events associated with the remnants of Tropical Storm Francis in early September hit very selected areas in the Towns of Woodhull and Howard. Woodhull had the most with 5.5 inches of rain in less than 12 hours. The resulting flooding in both areas led to mobilization of emergency rescue teams for people trapped by floodwaters. High flows on the Tuscarora Creek provided some of the most dramatic flooding we have seen in many years. There were many flood rescues, severe damage to the County Route 85 bridge (requiring replacement), and a significant test of the levees through the Village of Addison. Following right on the heels of Francis were the remnants of Tropical Storm Ivan. Ivan provided a continuous soaking of this basin with rainfall rates of ½ inch per hour at times over a 12-hour period. Stream flows were high but no flash flooding was generated in our area. However, Ivan did place about 6 to 8 inches of rain in the Mansfield area of Pennsylvania. This provided a flow into the Tioga-Hammond Dam project that would have stressed all of the levees through the Erwin/Corning area. It proved that the dams provide valuable protection to this area. However, the fact that this rainfall stopped in the Mansfield area, also demonstrates how close we came to the type of flooding that we all fear. A storm track 50 miles farther north would have placed this rainfall above the protection of the dams and could have created a widespread event of the magnitude we saw weeks before in the Woodhull area.

As we look ahead to 2005, the projections are for an even busier Tropical Weather Season. 2004 was proof that we cannot forget how vulnerable this area is to flooding. A look back at history proves that our past floods have direct connections with the hurricanes of the tropics. We must continue to plan for flooding, as well as maintain our infrastructure to protect our communities from the effects of high water.

Special thanks need to go out to the backbone of our organization, the volunteers. Without them there would have been no Flood Warning Service and no EES. Thanks to the Operations Group who continue to adapt and prepare for the inevitable flooding situation. Thanks to the Maintenance Group of Tom Sugars and Sue McLaughlin who continue to keep the system operating at 99% capacity. Thanks to the CHIT who keep us prepared for a large

Haz Mat incident. I also want to extend my thanks to the Board of Directors, both present and past, for their leadership and time commitment. And lastly, to the officers of the organization, Vice-President Scott Rodabaugh, Secretary Janet Thigpen, and Treasurer Joy Brewer. These are the individuals who really keep this operation running on an every day basis.

Thanks to All,

Michael A. Sprague  
President – EES

## TO OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS

The year 2004 brought its share of uninvited and unwelcome guests to the Southern Tier and surrounding areas. After a relatively quiet and uneventful first half of the year, several unnamed storms dropped by in July and August, resulting in area-wide rainfall totals of approximately 12.5 inches, nearly double the expected average amount (6.71 inches) for the two months. Significantly higher localized totals were realized throughout parts of Steuben County, where a late August storm dropped up to 6 inches of rain within a 24-hour period. Damages to county roads, bridges, and other infrastructure totaled several million dollars.

In early September, after near misses from other tropical storms, “Frances” came a calling, and wreaked further havoc upon already damaged and distressed areas of Steuben County. Approximately 3.5 inches of rain fell throughout the water-laden area on September 9, with amounts of up to 6 inches recorded in the Tuscarora Creek watershed. Residents outside the levee-protected areas in the village of Addison suffered heavy flooding, with Tuscarora Creek cresting within three feet of the top of the levee system.

Finally, one week later, “Ivan” paid a visit to the area, and again dropped over 3 inches of rain area. Luckily, the storm’s intensity was on the lighter side, and only minor flooding occurred in our communities. All told, the July through September events caused an estimated \$10+ million in damages to Steuben County roads and bridges alone. Millions more in damage costs were realized throughout the area.

That being said, the repeated storm events were “handled” extremely well due to the coordinated efforts of emergency management organizations throughout Steuben and Chemung County, as well as the National Weather Service (NWS), Army Corps of Engineers (thank you dam tenders!), and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Communication between the agencies was continuous throughout the events, starting with NWS conference calls often days in advance of rainfall. As the events unfolded, field observations were often heard simultaneously by all agencies via DEC radio communications. Gage readings, precipitation amounts, river crest forecasts and respective agency actions were exchanged between all organizations. This underlines the chief value of the Flood Warning Service (FWS) and the entire Environmental Emergency Services (EES) organization. With the wealth of information provided by EES gages (river, precipitation) and other sources (U.S. Geological Survey, NWS, DEC, etc.), critical decisions (detours, evacuations, installation of closures, allocation of resources, etc.) can be made to lessen the impacts of potentially devastating flooding events (or chemical spills). However, without the timely provision of that data, and the knowledge of each agency’s respective roles, those decisions become much less likely to have a positive impact. In times of cutbacks, personnel changes, retirements, etc., the function of EES ensures that coordination efforts between the respective agency representatives (new faces and old) will be kept in the forefront. Weekly radio checks, monthly (FWS) and bi-monthly (EES Board of Director’s) meetings, and other routine get-togethers ensure faces and voices are familiar and agency responsibilities, as well as strengths and weaknesses, are known. In reality, though the rainfall may only last a few hours, planning and management of the event never ends.

As we head into what appears to be a cycle of more frequent hurricanes (“forecaster confidence that this will be an active hurricane season is very high” –NOAA 2005 Outlook), it may be expected that we will endure additional periods of uneasy feelings and rising waters. However, with the continued community support for EES, and the efforts of our volunteers to ensure that the “system” is operating at all levels, we can also expect to be confident that decisions will be made with the best data available, and the coordinated effort of all involved. For that, as always, thanks are owed to all of our EES supporters, friends, and associates.

Scott Rodabaugh  
Vice President – EES

## **FLOOD WARNING SERVICE (FWS)**

This past year has brought about many changes to the Flood Warning Service with the retirement of Bob Gardner as Operations Chief. Bob has still remained very active in the Flood Warning Service, continuing his weekly status checks. However, he has chosen to pass on operational tasks of maintaining operations lists, chasing computer bugs, and coordinating monthly training. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bob for his many years of dedication as Operations Chief and for helping us protect the residences of Steuben and Chemung Counties. I will continue to grow with his guidance.

This past year was a real test for the flood warning service due to the large number of events that affected our area, specifically during the Fall Hurricane Season. Storms impacted our area on several occasions and the FWS did activate on a couple of those occasions. The opportunity to have someone else looking over our shoulders is important to the local agencies serviced by FWS and again, I am grateful to the volunteer staff that assists us throughout the year.

This past year we have made great strides toward updating and enhancing our network of stream and precipitation gauges. Tom Shugars and Sue McLaughlin have worked feverishly to make sure the system is tweaked to provide the most accurate and up to date information available. We replaced the repeater on Quakenbush Hill with a new unit. This added to our capabilities because we left the old repeater in place as a back up, something we never had before. All of the gauge data that makes FWS work, run through the Quakenbush repeater, so this has always been our most vulnerable position. We also added a repeater to Mount Washington in Bath to receive signals from gauges on the western part of the system. We have also worked toward compliance with new FCC regulations on narrow banding. Currently over 50% of our system is in compliance and additional equipment will be placed this year to achieve full compliance. With the new repeater at Mt. Washington, we were able to add some gauges to the system that were spotty or we were never able to read before, such as Keuka Lake and Bath VA River Gauge. Hopefully, Avoca and Cohocton river gauges will soon follow. All of our river gauges, with the exception of West Cameron, have been updated with new *High Sierra* shaft encoders to replace the old mechanical versions installed in 1984. Sue has been working to make adjustments to the software on both the Bobcat and Gator computer systems to help make the data easier to use and manage. These improvements include a new rain data screen, which shows time increments. Another new feature has been improved river data/graphs, which also help with detection of bad data. I would like to again take this time to thank Tom and Sue for their outstanding hard work and dedication at keeping our system on-line and running.

Another focus this year has been to enhance the number of volunteers we have available for operations. With the new software and equipment upgrades some of the folks who have been longtime volunteers of the Flood Warning Service have chosen to step down due to lack of time to learn the new system. With this said we have been in the process of trying to identify new volunteers who will learn and support the system. We have managed to bring in a couple of new faces who seem very interested in learning more about Flood Warning

Service and EES. We will continue to try to identify new volunteers to help support our operation and provide the needed depth to ensure efficient operations during future events.

Over this past year we have had a couple of training opportunities with the National Weather Service (NWS). I would like to thank John Chiamonte from NWS Binghamton, along with Bill Marosi and Bob Fenner from the Mid Atlantic River Forecast Center (MARFC) in State College, who have taken the time to develop training programs for our volunteers and have traveled to Corning to meet our folks and form that very important bond between our agencies. I believe the volunteers have enjoyed meeting and learning from the weather service guys and we plan to continue this connection in the future.

In closing, I would like to again thank the volunteers. Without you the Flood Warning Service would not operate. You are all great at what you do, and I would not want to go through an event without you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Timothy D. Marshall".

Timothy D. Marshall  
Flood Warning Operations



## **CHEMICAL HAZARD INFORMATION TEAM (CHIT)**

Mission statement of the Chemical Hazard Information Team: “To provide chemical and safety information and guidance to local emergency responders in the event of hazardous materials incidents”

The Chemical Hazard Information Team (CHIT) had a quiet year for 2004. There was a change in Fire Chief in Elmira and some changes in volunteer personnel that prompted an evaluation of past practices and procedures. These changes were necessary to align the CHIT function with the current emergency response structure that CHIT volunteers would be responding with. As part of this process, the CHIT Steering Committee has recommended several items to the Board of Directors for action in 2005. The committee suggested finding a CHIT Coordinator/Director from within CHIT, who would meet with the Steering Committee to recruit new volunteers; develop training opportunities for the CHIT members, as well as emergency responders; update policies/procedures; and evaluate Haz Mat equipment needs for the emergency responders. The CHIT Group continues to look forward to providing this valuable resource to the communities.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION/EDUCATION (PIE)**

This has been an exciting year for the Public Information & Education (PIE) Committee of Environmental Emergency Services. We were able to secure a \$7,500 member item grant from Senator Kuhl and Assemblyman Bacalles to purchase NOAA Weather Radios to distribute to special needs facilities. These radio receivers pick up NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts of local warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24-hours a day. During an emergency, an alarm signal activates weather radios in the listening area. A special message then provides critical information targeted to the specific location. Installation of two new NOAA Weather Radio transmitters in 2003 now provides broadcast coverage throughout Steuben and Chemung Counties.

The grant funding will enable EES to purchase NOAA Weather Radio receivers for facilities that house “high risk populations,” such as day care centers, nursing homes, community residences, schools, etc. The PIE committee met several times to identify the type of radio and the locations at which they will be placed. We compiled a list of more than 200 organizations across the two-county area that meet our criteria for receiving a radio. All recipients will be facilities that serve those with special needs, the elderly, or children. First priority went to locations that house overnight residents, followed by facilities with large populations during regular daytime hours. Radio distribution in 2005 will be accompanied by publicity and information about how to use the radios. In addition, the public will be encouraged to purchase NOAA Weather Radios so that they can receive timely notification of potentially life-threatening situations, such as tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, flash flooding, severe winter weather, or a chemical release.

The committee has also made progress on upgrading the EES website. Check it out at [www.highwater.org](http://www.highwater.org).

I look forward to working with the PIE committee as we continue to support the efforts of EES in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,



For Lee Hanle Younge  
Chairman – PIE

## 2004 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### FUNDING:

Cash on Hand January 1, 2004	\$ 18,044
Chemung & Steuben Counties	14,400
Local Government	10,900
Photocopying Service	234
Interest Income	<u>477</u>
<b>Sub-Total:</b> (includes \$30,000 transfer from IFLOWS acct.)	\$ 74,056
PSCIM	473
NOAA/IFLOWS Grant	<u>119,992</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 194,521</b>

### EXPENDITURES:

Operating Expenses	
Communications	\$ 2,986
Accounting Fees & Tax Reporting	900
Bank Charges, Contingencies, and Miscellaneous	343
Flood Warning Service Equipment Maintenance, Repair, and Rental	6,959
Flood Warning Service Education and Meetings	1,153
Equipment	3,977
CHIT Training and Reference Materials	1,160
Public Information & Education (PIE)	<u>781</u>
<b>Sub-Total:</b>	\$ 18,259
PSCIM	0
NOAA/IFLOWS Grant	<u>58,049</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 76,308</b>

**CASH ON HAND JANUARY 1, 2005** **\$118,213**

## 2004 FINANCIAL SUMMARY (continued)

### 2005 FORECAST

#### ESTIMATED FUNDING:

Cash on Hand January 1, 2005	\$ 55,797
Chemung & Steuben Counties	14,400
Municipalities for Flood Warning	10,900
Interest Income	500
State Initiation (NOAA Radios)	<u>7,500</u>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	\$ 89,097
PSCIM	473
NOAA/IFLOWS Grant	<u>50,000</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 139,570</b>

#### ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES:

Operating Costs for FWS	\$ 20,000
Equipment Reserve Fund	40,500
Training Fund	
Flood Warning Service (FWS)	10,000
Chemical Hazard Information Team (CHIT)	4,000
Public Information/Education (PIE)	<u>14,000</u>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	\$ 88,500
PSCIM Expenses	473
NOAA/IFLOWS Grant	<u>50,000</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 138,973</b>

**FORECASTED SURPLUS:** **\$ 597**

Joy Brewer  
Treasurer – EES

## **2004 CONTRIBUTORS**

The Board of Directors is grateful to the following local governments for their financial contributions to operating expenses of EES:

Chemung County

Steuben County

(V) Bath

(T) Big Flats

(T) Corning

(C) Elmira

(T) Elmira

(T) Erwin

(T) Horseheads

(T) Lindley

(T) Southport

# MISSION STATEMENT

## **Mission Statement – Environmental Emergency Services (EES)**

To advise and inform the populace of Chemung and Steuben Counties in an effort to reduce the adverse effects of severe flooding, drought and hazardous material incidents which contribute to environmental emergencies.

### **EES Responsibilities**

1. Provide local emergency response agencies with early warning information.
  2. Maintain communication and coordination among agencies, through its Board of Directors, who share concern for environmental issues.
  3. During emergencies maintain communication with local, state and federal partners.
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## **Mission Statement – Flood Warning Service (FWS)**

To collect pertinent rainfall, climate and river data and to use this information to assist Emergency Management Offices (EMO) in determining areas of concern for potential high water or drought problems in Chemung and Steuben Counties.

### **FWS Responsibilities**

1. Provide the EMO in each county with accurate and updated severe weather information during flooding emergencies, whenever possible.
  2. Develop fail-safe communication links with the EMO in each county, with the National Weather Service, US Army Corps of Engineers and with the Region 8 NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.
  3. Organize, train and maintain a volunteer corps of rain gauge readers and a volunteer operational staff for the Gustina Emergency Operation Center.
  4. Maintain and service those sensors for rainfall, climate and river levels, which are under Flood Warning Service control.
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## **Mission Statement – Chemical Hazard Information Team (CHIT)**

To provide chemical and safety information and guidance to local emergency responders in the event of hazardous material incidents.

### **CHIT Responsibilities**

1. Maintain a cadre of local specialists in related disciplines to assist emergency responders.
2. Provide funding and training opportunities for CHIT members and local emergency responders.
3. Supply specialized materials such as: software, equipment and a reference library.

November 12, 2002

**ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY SERVICES, INC.  
CHEMUNG & STEUBEN COUNTIES**

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(2004)**

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