

No present flood danger

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 23 June 2011 19:58 -

City officials realize water situation could change quickly.

Water levels are high all around the city and they are likely to remain that way with plenty of snow melt yet to flow this direction.

The Platte River is beyond full, already spilling over its edges into the KOA campground south of Gothenburg.

So far, though, city residents and business owners have been spared any major water damage.

City administrator Bruce Clymer said officials are working to keep it that way.

Representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers met with city officials and property owners on June 15 to share information and predictions of what's to come.

The Corps is expecting water to reach between the 10-year and 50-year flood stage but not to the 100-year mark.

A 100-year flood is calculated to be the level of flood water expected to be equaled or exceeded every 100 years on average.

The 100-year flood has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any single year.

Similarly, a flood level expected to be equaled or exceeded every 10 years on average is known as a 10-year flood.

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“The low end of the expected Platte flows here would create a 10-year flood,” Clymer said after the meeting.

Federal Emergency Management Agency flood insurance mapping from May 2011 shows peak Platte discharges of 11,000 cubic feet per second would create a 10-year flood.

That’s the low end of the spectrum.

If the Platte reaches its maximum expected flow discharge of 25,000 cfs, it would create a 50-year flood.

“Right now there doesn’t seem to be a big concern about a major flood in Gothenburg,” Clymer said, “but we requested technical assistance from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency so we can be prepared.”

That’s the key, he said.

Knowing ahead of time what kind of water flow is expected and working toward prevention is much easier than cleaning up a huge mess afterward, he said.

The Corps of Engineers information shows that river flows recorded at Henderson, CO, will take approximately six to seven days to show up in Gothenburg.

Comparatively, the flows at the Brady gauge take eight to 12 hours to arrive here.

The current river stage at Brady is 7.9 feet with a corresponding flow of 6,000 cfs.

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“We’re keeping an eye down the road so we have plenty of time to plan if we need to,” Clymer said.

Most of this flow, according to the Corps of Engineers, is from the North Platte River and is due to water being released from Lake McConaghy.

In the meantime, residents were told to pay attention to flow levels and heed warnings due to recent and expected heavy rains but there is no need for immediate alarm in Gothenburg.

“We’re armed with information and contacts for assistance,” Clymer said. “If we need help, I’m confident we will get it quickly.”

Clymer said as of midday Tuesday, rain still had not triggered flooding in Dawson County.

“However, this is a situation that has the potential to change quickly depending on the weather,” he said.