



**BERRIEN COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
OF BERRIEN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

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PRESS RELEASE UPDATE #3

Widespread flooding event update: Thursday February 22, 2018

Berrien County officials have been in contact with Indiana Michigan Power officials regarding hydro-electric dams that they operate on the rivers in Berrien County. The below information has been provided by I&M and is being shared with the public.

Heavy rain combined with snow melt brought the St. Joseph River in southwest Michigan and north-central Indiana to record levels, producing flooding that required some customers to be disconnected and affecting the six hydro-electric dams I&M operates on the river. I&M is working closely with local city officials and first responders, both to safely disconnect power to customers in flooded areas and to communicate the role of dams in connection with the river.

Currently, all of I&M's dams along the St. Joseph River in Northern Indiana and Michigan are operating per engineered design. The Buchanan Hydro Plant is operating near capacity, but there is still room in our system to pass high river flows. I&M has notified the appropriate public safety officials in Berrien County about the status of the dam and will provide updates in coming days.

I&M's dams are not designed as storage or flood-control facilities. They are operated "run-of-river," meaning some water goes through the generation equipment and then is passed down the river. The dams have relatively small reservoirs with water levels maintained in accordance with I&M's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license.

I&M is following all state and federal rules and regulations. Employees are monitoring river levels at each location around the clock and will for the next few days.

According to the National Weather Service, the St. Joseph River has crested in Niles, South Bend and Elkhart. Crests further downstream toward Buchanan are expected this weekend. Power to about 250 customers in Michigan and about 300 in Indiana was disconnected to protect against electrical hazards caused by rising water. Some disconnections were made at individual homes; others involved switching off power to lines supplying specific neighborhoods in danger of flooding. Most disconnections came at the request of public safety officials.

I&M urges customers and the public to exercise extreme caution. In the event waters rise around your home or business:

- Disconnect electrical appliances and **DO NOT** touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- Do not go into any room or basement if water is covering appliance cords that are plugged in or if water has reached the wall outlets.
- Don't enter a room if you hear popping or buzzing, or if you see sparks.
- Never go into a basement with standing water in it unless you are sure the electricity is off.
- If water rises to your electric meter base, or rises to wall outlets, call I&M to have your power disconnected. In Indiana, call 800-311-4634. In Michigan, call 800-311-6424. Our customer care experts will also give you information about reconnecting.