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Health and Housing Session  
From Sandbags to Sanity: The Policy Implications of the Midwest Floods of 2008

**Bullet Points:**

- The Floods of 2008 followed the 2007 flooding (14 counties declared for federal disaster assistance). All 14 2007 counties declared again in 2008. 5,000 residents (households) applied to FEMA for Individual Assistance.
- Saturday, June 7 - State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) activated (Level 3).
- Saturday, June 7 - DHS On-Call (Chemical/Natural Disasters) staff notified by Local Public Health Departments (LPHDs) of three local EOCS activated.
- Sunday, June 8 - SEOC activation raised to Level 2 (major state agencies including DHS).
- Monday, June 8 – DHS places “Disaster Health and Safety Tips” on DHS Website to provide information on dealing with and minimizing the public health impacts. Division of Public Health schedules daily conference calls with affected Local Public Health Departments to obtain information on local impacts, assess current needs and issues and respond accordingly.

**Subsequent DHS/DPH Activities**

- Conference calls (scheduled at the request of LPHD’s)
- Re-directed State (Central Office and Regional staff) to provide on-site assistance to LPHD’s (limited)
- Activated the Fee Exempt program for LPHD’s for private well water testing at the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene
- Immediate and Long Term Crisis Counseling Grant
- Posting of requested health topics on DHS Website.

**Key Observations:**

- From June 8 – September 3, 2547 Private Water Samples Tested
- 29% tested unsafe – coliform bacteria; 4.5% unsafe – E. coli bacteria

## **Activation of ESF-14 Long Term Recovery (National Response Plan)**

- Request to Public Health Service via FEMA.
- Privacy Act Request from State Health Officer
- Two Applied Public Health Teams from Public Health Service (two weeks each)
- Focused on “clusters” of unsafe water samples
- August 22 – September 18: 1043 site visits
- Public Health Collaboration (Federal, State & Local)

## **Long Term Recovery Issues**

- Identified in Wisconsin Recovery Task Force (WRTF) Report

## **2008 Flooding Impacts**

- 30 counties – federal declarations, almost 41,000 households applied for IA

## **Future Recommendations**

- Use 2008 WRTF as “Blueprint” for future recovery efforts. More emphasis on recovery efforts - must use mitigation as a key in prevention.