



**New York**  
Voluntary Organizations  
Active in Disaster

COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION

# July 2015 Chautauqua County Flooding

After Action Report (AAR)

Preliminary

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## INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared to document the response and recovery efforts of NYS Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NYVOAD) to the flooding event that impacted the Chautauqua County in July 2015. Although multiple agencies initially responded and remained on-scene throughout the event, this report specifically focuses on the response and recovery efforts of NYVOAD.

NYVOAD is comprised of thirty-five non-profit and faith based humanitarian organizations that respond and provide relief to survivors of disasters. The purpose of NYVOAD is to bring together organizations active in disaster services to foster more effective preparedness, response and disaster recovery in New York State. (Direct service to impacted communities is provided by the *member agencies* of NYVOAD, not by NYVOAD itself.) NYVOAD is a coordinating agency whose goal is to enhance planning, training and communications between organizations active in disaster mitigation, response and recovery.

## SITUATION

On July 14, 2015, heavy sustained rainfall caused flooding in Chautauqua County affecting the towns of Westfield, Brockton, Silver Creek, Fredonia, Sheridan, Forestville and Portland. The county Office of Emergency Services became the focal point for the initial response with Western NY Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WNY VOAD) having a major coordinating role. NYVOAD became aware of the situation on July 14<sup>th</sup> and began to activate internally and externally.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

<b>Tuesday, July 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Rainfall caused heavy flooding. Notice appeared in the Red Cross Morning Report. WNY VOAD contacted to determine if NYVOAD support needed. American Red Cross opened a shelter. NYVOAD executive committee alerted to situation.
<b>Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup></b>	NYS DHSES <sup>1</sup> contacted WNY VOAD to offer support and request information regarding the impact of flooding on residents
<b>Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Continued with e-mail updates from WNY VOAD
<b>Monday, July 20<sup>th</sup></b>	Disaster assistance center set up at Portland Fire Hall. NYVOAD monthly executive committee

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services; this reference primarily refers to the Recovery – Individual Assistance section of the agency.

	conference call included discussion of possible support. Broadcast e-mail to NYVOAD members w/capacity to respond to clean-up requests.
<b>Tuesday, July 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Conference call w/WNY VOAD, members of NYVOAD with clean-up capacity. Notes prepared of call & distributed to those attending.
<b>Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Second conference call with attendance expanded to include NYS Human Services Branch and Chautauqua County OES. Notes prepared & put on NYVOAD website. All NYVOAD members notified of action in Chautauqua County. POC list for each responding agency and resource support ticket prepared and distributed.
<b>Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	Third conference call. Decision made to suspend calls until Monday, July 27 <sup>th</sup> . Notes, POC list and resource ticket prepared & distributed
<b>Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup></b>	Final conference call. Operation turned back to WNY VOAD and Chautauqua County to begin LTR discussions.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Below are listed the responding agencies and the support offered by each agency.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Volunteers for clean-up
Mennonite Disaster Services	Volunteers for clean-up
Team Rubicon	Volunteers available for clean-up
UMCOR/UNYVIM	Volunteers for clean-up; support for grant during long-term recovery phase
Southern Baptist Convention of NY	Volunteers for clean-up
Lutheran Disaster Response	Volunteers for clean-up; sheltering at Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center
Westfield United Methodist Church	Shelter and feeding for volunteers
Western NY VOAD	Coordination of response on the ground
Mission Meadows	Feeding available

## CHALLENGES

- Initial contact with NYVOAD member agencies listed in the Member Directory as having the capacity to respond to clean-up requests was hampered by inaccurate or missing contact information. Much time was spent through internet searches in identifying the most useful POC for each agency.
- Preventing “cross-talk” among agencies was difficult, even though each agency was encouraged to work directly with the POC at Chautauqua County emergency services.

- Gaining accurate and timely information on the size and scope of the disaster regarding potential deployment of volunteers was at times difficult.
- The lack of a communications committee within NYVOAD meant the record-keeping workload during the event could not be shared.
- The lack of a NYVOAD activation plan required this to be an ad-hoc response.
- Low response to long-term recovery request for participation from member agencies limited the ability of NYVOAD to complete its mission.

## SUCSESSES

- Communication with NYS DHSES, NYS Human Services, WNY VOAD, responding members of NYVOAD and Chautauqua County OES was, in general, excellent, occurring through both e-mail and conference calls.
- NYVOAD members worked closely with the appropriate Chautauqua County POCs for sheltering and feeding of volunteers.
- The Chautauqua County and WNY VOAD leadership was efficient and collaborative all during the response phase.
- The value and need for a forum to humanitarian relief resources was understood by local, county and State government officials involved with this incident.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The NYVOAD Member Directory be updated. We may wish to look toward FEMA Corps or AmeriCorps volunteers to take on this task. It is imperative that each agency have at least two points of contact complete with e-mail and 24-hr phone contact information.
- A communications committee for NYVOAD be established as a top priority.
- The NYVOAD activation plan be completed.
- Creation of a template for initial situational awareness and subsequent updates on the size and scope of the incident for use by regional and local VOAD entities.