



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®
Great Lakes and
Ohio River Division

News Release

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US Army Corps of Engineers Provides Flood Protection

CINCINNATI, OHIO – The US Army Corps of Engineers initiated flood control operations throughout the Ohio River Valley to deal with widespread regional flooding after four days of heavy rainfall averaging 4 to 8 inches over much of southern Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Flood damage reduction in the Ohio basin is achieved by a combination of reservoirs, levees and floodwalls. Storing excess water in the reservoirs reduces the maximum height of flood waters in downstream areas. The floodwalls and levees protect enclosed areas from waters up to the design flood height. In many cases the two methods work together and provide additional protection.

Flood water is being held through a basin-wide flood damage reduction system of 75 reservoirs and five dry dams located on the Ohio River tributaries. The Ohio River flood damage reduction system is designed to hold water at reservoirs on the tributaries far back from the Ohio River itself. This provides protection for communities on local streams while managing the amount of water going to the main rivers. This system ultimately reduces crests on the Ohio River and the volume of water entering the Mississippi River as well.

Current flooding in some areas is compounded by widespread snowmelt from heavy snow cover, resulting in saturated ground and strong flow in tributary creeks. The regions south of the Ohio River have not been significantly affected by recent rainfall, but controlling these reservoirs also manages the overall flow into the main Ohio River. The largest concentration of reservoirs is in the higher elevations on the southern tributaries.

Over the years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has built 539 miles of levees and more than 100 local flood damage reduction projects to protect lives, communities and property from flooding in the Ohio River region. The Corps became the federal agency leading flood and storm damage reduction through the 1917 Flood Control Act. Many of the Ohio River projects are better known for recreation, hydropower and water supply capabilities and were authorized and built as the result of the disastrous floods of record in 1936 and 1937.

The storage volume for this reservoir system amounts to approximately 30 million acre-feet, which is equivalent to 1.30 feet of water over the entire state of Indiana, 1.18 feet over the Commonwealth of Kentucky or 1.14 feet over the state of Ohio.

Reservoirs are designed to hold a large capacity of water in order to limit damage from flooding, but whether rainfall is widespread or localized, engineering solutions can not always completely manage flooding.

System wide reservoir storage is at 16 percent today, up from 11 percent yesterday and 7 percent the previous day. Thirty-three projects are storing over 25 percent of their capacity. These projects are located on the Allegheny, Muskingum, Hocking, Scioto, Little Miami, Mill Creek, Great Miami and Wabash rivers.

The four flood damage reduction projects on the Scioto River – Alum Creek, Delaware, Deer Creek and Paint Creek – are all over 50 percent exceeding their highest capacity level recorded. Five projects on the Miami River system are approaching or exceeding their highest capacity recorded, Caesar Creek, W.H. Harsha, West Fork, C.J. Brown and Brookville. Crooked Creek on the Allegheny River is expected to

reach a new pool of record tomorrow. There is still significant capacity in all of these systems to limit flooding.

Ohio River flows are well above normal throughout the 981 miles, ranging from 588 percent at Pittsburgh to 147 percent at Paducah. The middle Mississippi River is rising very rapidly and will crest over flood at several locations. The Ohio River will crest near or above flood stage at most locations. To control flooding on the Lower Mississippi River, the US Army Corps of Engineers in Cincinnati manages the release of stored water into the Ohio River at Kentucky and Barkley Dams near Paducah, Ky., from the Tennessee and Cumberland River, because the Ohio provides 60 percent of the water flowing into the lower Mississippi River at Cairo, Ill.

For more information call Public Affairs at Pittsburgh, Karen Auer at 412-395-7106 Allegheny River; Huntington, Peggy Noel at 304-399-5353 Muskingum, Hocking and Scioto Rivers; Louisville, Carol Batenik at 502-315-6769 for Mill Creek, Miami and Wabash Rivers; Nashville, Ed Evans at 615-736-78353 for Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers.