



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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A Weekly Column for the
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Response to Flooding Overwhelming

State Agencies, National Guard & Volunteers Fight Flood Of 2008

JEFFERSON CITY – There's an old saying that you can tell the measure of a man by how he responds during a crisis, and I've got to tell you I have never been more proud of the people of this state than I have been during the past few days as communities fight another record flood.

For more than a week, my staff and I have been joining folks in communities up and down the Mississippi River to fill sandbags in an effort to protect homes, businesses and farm fields from the ravages of the rising river. We've spent time in Alexandria, Clarksville, Louisiana, Hannibal, Canton and West Quincy to name just a few places we've been pitching in to help with flood relief efforts.

Frankly, the number of folks who have volunteered to come out and help fight the flood during the past couple of weeks has been unbelievable. It is so good to see neighbors helping neighbors, family members working side by side and strangers coming from across the state to help folks they've never met. I also want to thank the 700 or so members of the Missouri National Guard for coming to our aid. This week the governor called out hundreds of Guard members from across the state to respond to this emergency. Guard members have been assisting with sandbagging operations, monitoring the levees and manning traffic control points. The Guard also has established a quick reaction force of 100 members and has been coordinating their efforts with officials in Clark, Lewis, Marion, Ralls, Pike and Lincoln counties.

Additionally, members of the Missouri Highway Patrol and the Missouri Water Patrol have stationed officers on flood duty in the affected areas. The Department of Corrections has sent dozens of prisoners from Vandalia and Bowling Green to fill sandbags and the Department

of Conservation has more than 100 employees performing flood duties along the Mississippi River. The Department of Social Services has been helping folks who have been forced to leave their homes find shelter.

I have been working with various state agencies to help coordinate relief efforts in northeast Missouri and I realize folks are going to need a lot of help from the state and the federal governments to get back on their feet. That fight will come later – right now I am concentrating on actually fighting the flood. I will work with our state and federal agencies to try get help with our financial needs once the river crests and the flooding subsides.

If you would like to volunteer to help folks fill and place sandbags, visit <http://khqa.com/news/content.aspx?id=146586> to see the most current list of where volunteers are needed. If you or your family need resource referrals or non-emergency help, call 211, which is now available for most areas of the state and helps folks with disaster information and referrals. If 211 service is not available where you live, call **800-427-4626** for help. If you are interested in volunteering or making a donation, you should contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army or a faith-based group that responds during emergencies.

I also need to thank the folks who work for the State Emergency Management Agency for coordinating the relief efforts up and down the river. The governor activated SEMA on June 11, and the headquarters has been fully staffed with 50 to 60 people working each day from 7 am until 11 pm, with a duty officer answering the phones overnight. SEMA's emergency operations center is expected to remain active for about another week.

If you need assistance, please feel free to call my office or call the Public Information Officer at SEMA, Susie Stonner, at **(573) 526-9136**. If you have time to help folks fight the flood of 2008, I know your time and efforts will be greatly appreciated. It's going to take a long time before things return to normal for the communities along the river, but working together, I know we can get through this latest natural disaster.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at **(573) 751-7852**, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.