

# Oxford, Maryland Adverse Weather ~ Emergency Operations Plan 2024

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*September, 2024*

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## PART I - GENERAL

### A. Summary

This plan, termed the Oxford Emergency Operations Plan, is intended to provide guidance to the citizens, staff, and visitors of Oxford, Maryland if an adverse weather emergency is imminent. This plan is not intended to be a precise course of action, but rather a framework from which decisions can be affected to protect lives and property in extremely adverse weather conditions. Town officials, based on forecasts and other relevant information provided by local, state, and national authorities will make the determination of an imminent threat.

### B. Purpose

The intent of this plan is to establish guidelines for the direction, control, and coordination of preparation in the face of an imminent threat, including if necessary evacuation before the arrival of adverse weather conditions, in order to protect life and property. The plan establishes procedures for determining the imminent threat, advising the populace, executing evacuation if necessary, and recovery when needed, and assigns responsibility for these actions. Although the primary purpose of this plan is to address adverse weather emergencies, this plan can be implemented to respond to any emergency or event where a coordinated multiagency response or support is needed. This plan does not replace or take precedence over county, state, or federal/national emergency operations plans or procedures.

### C. Scope

This Plan encompasses all four phases of the emergency management cycle - - preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery - - and applies to all Town of Oxford departments. The plan is applicable to all organizations acting for or on behalf of the Town of Oxford in response to an emergency or in support of an event. This Plan addresses two different types of response scenarios:

**Planned or Anticipated Incidents**, which can be planned for in advance such as a hurricane or a winter storm, etc. and;

**Immediate Response Incidents** such as a tornado, flood, fire, or hazmat incident, etc.

### D. Concept of Operations

Talbot County Emergency Services has the primary responsibility for coordination of emergency management activities for all residents of Talbot County. The Town of Oxford has the responsibility of providing all necessary local support to Talbot County Emergency Services for the coordination of these emergency management activities. The activities support the following priorities:

- a. Minimize injury and loss of life
- b. Minimize property damage
- c. Minimize adverse environmental and economic impact
- d. Provide timely and accurate information to the public regarding emergencies
- e. Provide for the immediate needs of disaster survivors
- f. Acquire, access and disseminate emergency information
- g. Restore essential utilities and functions

## E. Plan Activation

This plan will be executed in whole or in part as directed by the Town Manager, in coordination with the Commissioners of Oxford, in response to an existing or an impending emergency. This plan may also be activated under the following circumstances: at the time of an actual disaster; when the Commissioners of Oxford have declared a local state of emergency; when the Talbot County Council or the Governor of Maryland has declared a State of Emergency for areas that include the Town of Oxford; or when a Presidential Declaration of an Emergency or Disaster is issued for areas that include the Town of Oxford.

## F. Phases of Emergency Management

The Town of Oxford's Emergency Management Program addresses all phases of emergency management for all types of incidents, including prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

### Prevention and Mitigation

**Prevention** involves identifying preventative, corrective, or deterring measures and actions to prevent or limit bodily injury, loss of life, or property damage from disasters and emergencies. It includes consideration of policy issues as well as structural projects within government and the private sector. Preventive measures are designed to provide more permanent protection from disasters; however, not all disasters can be prevented.

The goal of **Mitigation** is to prevent future loss by eliminating or reducing risks. Mitigation activities link the recovery and preparedness phases in the emergency management cycle, and can occur before or after an emergency. The goals of pre-emergency mitigation activities are to prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or reduce the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. The goal of post-emergency mitigation is to eliminate or reduce the impact of the hazards realized during the emergency. Post-emergency mitigation is part of the recovery process.

### Preparedness

**Preparedness** involves activities undertaken in advance of an emergency or disaster to adequately prepare for and develop the capability to respond to an emergency. Preparedness activities include planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising,

evaluating, and implementing corrective actions for the emergency management program and organization.

Preparedness activities develop operational capabilities and enable an effective response to an emergency or disaster, and involve working with government partners, the private sector, and non-governmental and volunteer organizations to coordinate pre-disaster education and planning activities, and lay the groundwork for coordinated disaster response.

## Response

Response is the actual provision of emergency services during a crisis including the coordination and management of resources to support emergency response operations. These activities help to reduce casualties and damage, and to speed recovery. Response activities include alerting and notifying the public, resource and logistical coordination, addressing immediate life safety issues, stabilization of the incident, and public information.

The Town of Oxford responds to emergencies by activating the Oxford Emergency Management Plan, coordinating with the Talbot County Emergency Services and/or the Talbot County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), coordinating with the Oxford Fire Company, coordinating with public, private and volunteer response partners as needed, coordinating and managing resources in support of emergency response, and preparing for recovery activities.

## Recovery

Recovery activities may be both short-term and long-term, ranging from conducting damage assessments, removing debris, restoration of critical facilities/infrastructure and essential utilities such as water and power, to providing assistance to communities to rebuild homes and businesses. Recovery may also incorporate mitigation measures designed to prevent future occurrences of a given hazard. Recovery begins as soon as possible after an incident occurs and may commence during the response phase.

## G. Direction, Control and Coordination

### *National Incident Management System*

Talbot County Emergency Services, as the controlling emergency management organization, is structured in accordance with the **National Incident Management (NIMS)** and the **Incident Command System (ICS)**. NIMS integrates existing processes and methods into a unified national framework for incident management. This framework forms the basis for interoperability and compatibility that enables a diverse set of public and private organizations to conduct effective incident management operations.

It does this through a core set of concepts, principles, procedures, organizational structures (Incident Command System, multi-agency coordination, and joint information systems),

terminology, and standards requirements applicable to a broad community of NIMS users. To ensure interoperability and compatibility, NIMS is based on an appropriate balance of flexibility and standardization. It provides a consistent and flexible national framework within which government and private entities at all levels can work together to manage domestic incidents, regardless of their cause, size, location, or complexity.

Emergency management and incident response in the Town of Oxford is coordinated using the Incident Command System (ICS) so as to allow for seamless integration with Talbot County Emergency Services.

### ***Incident Command***

**Single Incident Commander** - Most incidents involve a single incident commander. In these incidents, a single person commands the incident response and is the decision-making authority.

**Unified Command** - A Unified Command involves two or more individuals sharing the authority normally held by a single incident commander. Unified Command may be used during larger incidents, or incidents involving multiple agencies or jurisdictions. A Unified Command typically includes a command representative from major involved agencies and/or jurisdictions. A Unified Command acts as a single entity. It is important to note that in Unified Command the command representatives will appoint a single Operations Section Chief.

**Area Command** - During a situation involving multiple incidents, an Area Command may be established to provide for Incident Commanders at separate locations. Generally, an Area Commander will be assigned - a single person - and the Area Command will operate to provide logistical and administrative support to the separate incidents and their incident commanders. Area Command usually does not include an Operations function.

For the purpose of this emergency plan, there is an assumption that the Town of Oxford would have a Single Incident Commander, appointed by the Commission President, who would then report to Talbot County Emergency Services established Commander.

**Transfer of Command** - Responsibility can be transferred during an incident for several reasons, including the availability of a more qualified person, transfer of jurisdictional control, and normal personnel turnover due to an extended incident. Transfer of Command should be done in writing when possible and posted to notify others.

**Incident Command Post (ICP)** - An ICP is the field location where the Incident Commander operates. The location of the ICP will be determined by the Incident Commander and is to be located outside of the immediate incident scene and the potential hazard zone. This location may be at the Oxford Community Services Building at 101 Market Street, the Oxford Public Works Facility at 100 JL Thompson Drive, or if circumstances demand it, a remote location outside of town that has access to necessary power and communications infrastructure. During a hurricane or severe flooding event, a second Incident Command Post may be set up at the Town Office located at 101 Market Street. During severe flooding events, the Oxford Community Services Building can become isolated from the rest of the town by flood waters. Both locations

shall be equipped to operate as a command center under the direction of the designated Incident Commander.

### ***Emergency Operations Center***

The Talbot County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) serves as the central point for coordination of all county emergency and response activities, including the Town of Oxford. The Talbot County Emergency Plan should be referenced for all EOC location, procedure, and protocol. EOC activation, staging areas, points of distribution, and location of shelters will be determined by the Talbot County Emergency Operations Center. For the purposes of this plan, the ICP will be the local point of coordination for these activities.

### ***Evacuation***

The Commissioners of Oxford have the authority to recommend Precautionary/Voluntary Evacuation to vulnerable people/areas in advance of an imminent danger. Talbot County Emergency Services or Emergency Operations Center and/or the Governor of Maryland have the authority to issue Recommended Evacuations and Mandatory Evacuations, and maintain all coordination of Evacuations. The Town of Oxford will assist with Evacuations in coordination with the EOC. The Town is in Evacuation Zone A as established by Talbot County for the earliest evacuations.

## **H. Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities**

The Commissioners of Oxford have designated emergency management leads that, depending on the severity of the event, may or may not be involved in emergency response and coordination activities. An Emergency Response Committee will convene in the face of an imminent threat (anticipated incident) or following a major emergency (immediate response). The Committee will consist of the President of the Oxford Commissioners (or in the absence, another Commissioner), the Town Manager, the Chief of Police, and a Public Works Supervisor, and if circumstances allow or require, the Chief of the Oxford Fire Company and a citizen representative or another member of the fire company. Where applicable, other community representatives/leaders will be kept apprised of information as necessary. \*If the Oxford Floodplain Manager is someone other than the Town Manager, this person should participate on this committee, as they have specific responsibilities following a flood event.

Once convened, this Committee will notify the Talbot County Emergency Services of their action.

Specific responsibilities are as follows:

#### **President of the Commissioners/Commissioners**

- Proclaim an imminent weather threat to Oxford
- Assemble and chair the Emergency Response Committee
- Initiate Adoption of an Emergency Declaration
- Liaise with town staff, citizens and guest to assist with actions taken to mitigate loss in Oxford
- Assign one Department Head as Incident Commander based on event and if required

### Town Manager

- Provide an Emergency Declaration for Adoption
- Notify Talbot County Emergency Services of the Emergency Declaration
- Liaise with Commission President/Commissioners on town operations
- Liaise with other local, state and national authorities as required
- Establish and maintain:
  - emergency notifications to the citizens
  - multiple lines of communication
  - coordination with the Talbot County Emergency Services/EOC
  - records of actions taken by the town to mitigate the damages of the adverse weather threat or response to a major emergency
  - a system for the expeditious employment of town resources as required
  - staffing for all departments
- Following an incident, organize recovery efforts, conduct damage assessments, liaise with county/state/federal agencies, and assign responsibilities to other staff as required

### Chief of Police

- Provide law enforcement
- Advise Commissioners on matters pertaining to public safety
- Advise Commissioners on vulnerable residents and special needs
- Oversee department staffing sufficient for emergency response
- Oversee evacuation of citizens, evacuation routes, and managed entry into Oxford for the duration of the emergency
- Liaise with other local, state and national authorities as required in coordination with the Town Manager
- Following an incident, assure safety of residents and security of properties during recovery efforts

### Public Works Supervisor/s

- Perform pre-event infrastructure preparations, fueling of trucks, equipment and generators, pre-staging of equipment and gear that may be necessary, clearing of drainage infrastructure, securing of equipment and property throughout town
- Maintain public works infrastructure throughout event
- Advise Town Manager on matters pertaining to public works with regards to operations, potential damage, and post event damage
- Advise Town Manager on matters pertaining to post event damage throughout town
- In the event of a power outage, coordinate with Police Chief to notify utility companies and advise the Town Manager regarding restoration of services
- Assist the Chief of Police and Chief of the Oxford Fire Company as required
- Following an incident assure water and sewer is operational; assist in securing the area, debris clean up, and providing support as required during recovery efforts



#### Chief, Oxford Fire Company

- Provide for fire, rescue and emergency medical services as required
- Advise Town Manager or Commission President on matters pertaining to fire services
- Assist as required and within capability in the event of an evacuation
- Provide rescue of persons from flood areas or emergency situations within capabilities

#### Citizen Representative

- Advise Town Manager or Commission President on matters pertaining to citizens' concerns regarding the health and safety of the community
- Serve as a conduit of information from citizens to the Emergency Response Committee

#### Floodplain Manager

- Participate in citizen outreach prior to, during, and following a flood/emergency event
- Coordinate with Town Manager and Public Works on Initial Damage Assessments,
- Liaison with local, state and federal emergency management teams for Preliminary Damage Assessments and coordination of Federal Assistance
- [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_preliminary-disaster-assessment\\_guide.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_preliminary-disaster-assessment_guide.pdf)
- Establish and Maintain detail records for Substantial Damage Improvement Permitting

Additionally the town has several non-governmental organizations that work closely with the town. The Oxford Business Association, Oxford Community Center and local Churches will be a good source for information distribution and post disaster support.

## **I. Direction and Control:**

Final direction and control of efforts in response to an adverse weather threat or other emergency shall reside with the President of the Commissioners of Oxford under a Declaration.

## **J. Public Messaging**

Various methods of public information dissemination are available. The decision to use a particular medium will be based on the urgency and the intended audience. To ensure one consistent and accurate voice, all public information releases should be coordinated through the Town Manager and should be consistent with releases provided by Talbot County Emergency Services/EOC. Some methods of distribution include:

- Press releases
- Press conferences
- Website updates
- Print, radio or televised announcements
- Social media updates

- Local or regional public information systems such as Reverse 911 systems and web/application based notification systems

## **K. Emergency Agency Notifications**

Emergency notification of community agencies is critical during times of emergency to ensure response partners have adequate time to prepare for an emergency and can assemble to respond to an emergency. The Town of Oxford receives emergency notifications directly from the Talbot County Emergency Services/EOC.

## **L. Emergency Alert and Warning**

Talbot County Emergency Services is responsible for providing notifications to all residents of the county. Public warning is accomplished using the following methods as appropriate:

- Emergency Alert System (EAS)
- Wireless Emergency Alerts
- Local Access TV Station
- Community Website Notifications
- Firehouse Sirens
- Social Media
- Reverse 911 Notification Systems

## **M. Plan Development and Maintenance:**

The development and maintenance of this Emergency Operations Plan shall be the responsibility of the Commissioners of Oxford with the advice or representatives designated by the Commissioners. An annual review shall occur each Spring.

## **N. Authorities and References**

Public Safety Article, Md Code Ann., §14-101

Declaration of a Local State of Emergency, Md Code Ann., Pub Safety §14-111

Local Government Article, Md. Code Ann., Section 5-202

Maryland Good Samaritan Act, Maryland Law: Courts and Judicial Proceedings §5-507

Executive Order 01.01.2005.09, the State of Maryland Adoption of the National Incident Management System

And any other applicable state and local laws.

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## PART II - EVACUATION PLAN

### Vulnerabilities

Oxford, Maryland is vulnerable to adverse weather and coastal flooding. The town has experienced the impacts of ice, snow, wind, flooding, and surge inundation, and these are known conditions that can have an impact on the town in the future. Because of these vulnerabilities, precautions must be taken to insure minimal impact to the residents, staff and visitors, protecting persons and property.

With regards to most weather related conditions, Oxford will generally have ample warning prior to the arrival of potentially damaging weather.

Prior to the arrival of adverse weather conditions, weather advisories are issued by the national weather service in the form of “Watches” and “Warnings.”

- **Watches** are issued when there is the potential for significant and hazardous weather within 48 hours. It does not mean that significant and hazardous weather will occur; it only means conditions make it possible.
- **Warnings** are issued when a significant and hazardous weather situation is occurring or is imminent.

The most anticipated severe weather advisories are listed below:

- Winter Storm Watch / Warning
- Blizzard Warning
- Ice Storm Warning
- High Wind Watch / Warning
- Severe Thunderstorm Watch /Warning
- Tornado Watch / Warning
- Hurricane Watch / Warning
- Coastal Flood Watch /Warning
- Flood Watch / Warning

### Evacuation

Should forecasted adverse weather conditions pose a sufficient threat to the citizens, Talbot County Emergency Services will make the determination that evacuation is recommended or in some cases mandatory. Evacuation Routes and Shelters are identified by Talbot County Emergency Services.

For the purpose of this plan, the assumed evacuation route will be down State Road 333 to the Town of Easton. Maryland uses the “Know Your Zone” Evacuation tool, which prioritizes evacuation for Talbot County and all of the State in an effort to evacuate based on priority and decrease the volume of traffic by spacing out the load on highways. The Town of Oxford is in Zone A also known as the Red Zone and

citizens are to evacuate when Zone A or the Red Zone is announced. Information regarding the “Know Your Zone” process can be found at this link:

<https://mema.maryland.gov/Pages/know-your-zone-md.aspx>

In the event of a Recommended or Mandatory Evacuation of the Oxford area, the citizens of Oxford are to leave the town using their own private vehicles, bring their evacuation go-bag supplies, and are to proceed to the Talbot County designated Emergency Shelter. In the event of a Recommended or Mandatory Evacuation of Talbot County or Eastern Shore of Maryland, citizens are to leave in their private vehicles when instructed to and follow the determined evacuation route.

Precautionary or Voluntary evacuation of persons in low-lying areas is always recommended in front of an imminent flooding event. Evacuation to the home of family or friends in higher areas is encouraged and having a personal evacuation plan for your family is highly recommended.

Information regarding emergency preparedness for specific weather related emergencies can be found at Talbot County Emergency Services: [https://www.talbotdes.org/plan\\_prepare.asp](https://www.talbotdes.org/plan_prepare.asp)

#### **In the event of an Evacuation, the following procedure will apply:**

- The President of the Oxford Commissioners will assemble the Emergency Response Committee
- Members of the Committee will advise the President with regard to their areas of responsibility
- A Plan of action will be developed in coordination with Talbot County Emergency Services
- The plan will include decision points at which time the respective phases of evacuation will commence
- Citizens will be notified of the situation by various means
- When decision points are reached, citizens will be advised to commence evacuation
- The Chief of Police will assume responsibility for the orderly evacuation of Oxford
- Evacuation will commence

#### **Concept of Operations for Emergency Evacuation:**

- The Emergency Operations Plan will be executed
- The Emergency Response Committee will determine the level of threat
- The Public Works, Oxford Police, and Oxford Fire Company will activate their plans
- Residents, Businesses, Visitors and Staff (Collectively: Citizens) will be advised regarding threat and suggested preparations
- When threat has reached a level where life and property are at peril, an evacuation order will be issued by the Commissioners or Talbot County Emergency Services
- Citizens will be notified regarding the threat and the phases of evacuation
- Persons in greatest peril, those who are ill or immobile, will be assisted and evacuated first
- Talbot County Emergency Services will be notified if transportation assistance is required

- The Oxford Fire Department will be designated as an assembly point for persons who are unable to provide their own transportation
- The Chief of Police will designate the appropriate evacuation route/s within town
- Talbot County Emergency Services will designate the appropriate evacuation route leaving town, which will be posted on the Oxford Fire Company sign on the Oxford Road
- Evacuation will commence

### **Shelters**

Oxford does not have a facility that meets the suggested requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross. Talbot County Emergency Services will designate the facility to be utilized for a Shelter in advance of the evacuation. The anticipated location is within the Town of Easton.

### **Staging**

- Staging for the Evacuation will be done at the Oxford Community Center, except that citizens with medical emergencies or requiring special medical attention should proceed to the Oxford Fire Department.

### **Last Resort Sheltering**

- A Shelter of Last Resort will be determined as required.

### **Notification**

Should the threat of extremely adverse weather conditions occur every means will be employed to ensure the citizens are kept advised.

- The primary means will be local radio and television stations
- Social Media, along with the Town of Oxford and the Talbot County Emergency Services Websites, will provide information
- Talbot County Emergency Services will utilize reverse 911 and their cell phone notification application to provide information regarding the threat and evacuation requirements
- Signs, flyers, loudspeakers, and any other means available will be used

If a person resides in an area known to flood or to be exposed to other adverse weather, it is incumbent upon that person to take precautions and not wait until adverse weather is imminent.

<b>EXTREME ADVERSE WEATHER OPERATIONS CHECK LIST</b>		
ASSIGNED		COMPLETED
	Town Manager notified of an imminent threat by TC Emergency Services	
	President of Commission notified of imminent threat	
	Remaining Commissioners notified of imminent threat	
	Public Works notified	
	Chief of Police notified	
	Emergency Response Committee assembled	
	Emergency Response Committee determines course of action	
	When conditions merit, begin notification of Citizens	
	Establish an Operations Center and prepare to provide information	
	As conditions deteriorate, begin notification of imminent evacuation	
	Commence evacuation	
	Prepare to secure the town	
	Commence final evacuation	
	Limit access to the town	
	Evaluate Damage and Dangers	
	Restore Services	
	Re open access to the town	
	Continue Damage Assessments	

Notes:

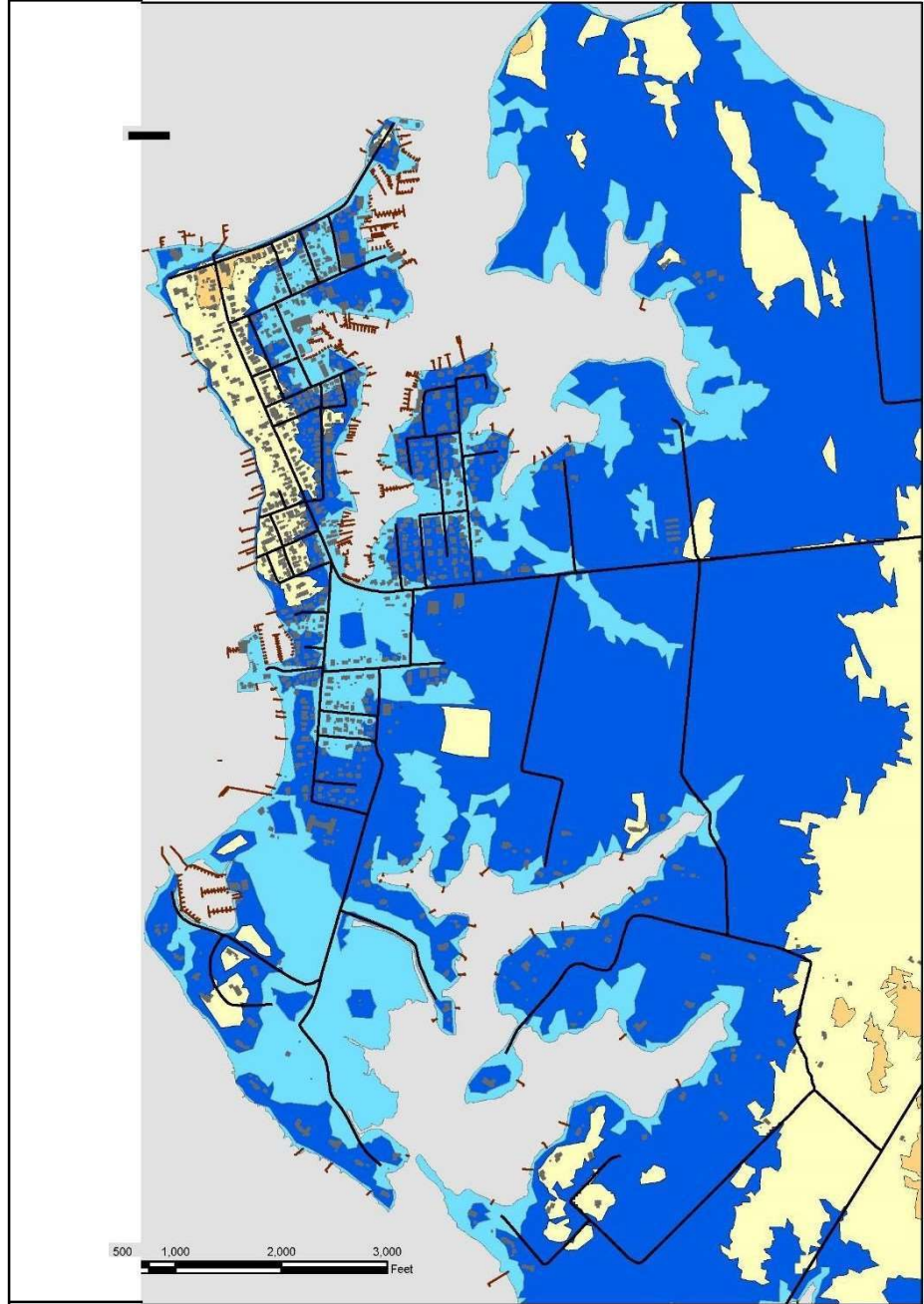

**Sample Notification Language:**

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HAS ESTABLISHED A WEATHER WATCH/WARNING FOR THE TOWN OF OXFORD, MARYLAND, IN ANTICIPATION OF EXTREMELY ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS. THIS COULD MEAN FLOODING OF LOW-LYING AREAS WITH POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO PERSONAL PROPERTY INCLUDING VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT. IF YOU LIVE IN AN AREA THAT IS LIKELY TO FLOOD, PLEASE MOVE YOUR VEHICLES TO HIGHER GROUND. MOVE YOUR VALUABLES TO A SAFE AREA OR SECOND FLOOR. IF YOU ARE DISABLED OR REQUIRE ASSISTANCE NOTIFY THE OXFORD POLICE IMMEDIATELY BY CALLING THE NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_. IF EVACUATION IS REQUIRED, YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED BY A REVERSE 911 CALL FROM TALBOT COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES. YOU WILL BE INSTRUCTED TO EVACUATE IN YOUR PERSONAL VEHICLE. IF YOU CANNOT EVACUATE YOURSELF, PLEASE NOTIFY THE OXFORD POLICE USING THE NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER. WHEN YOU EVACUATE, PLEASE TURN OFF ELECTRICITY TO YOUR HOME AND LOCK YOUR DOOR AS YOU LEAVE.

# TOWN OF OXFORD HURRICANE STORM SURGE MAP

Prepared by  
Talbot County  
Department of Public Works  
Geographic Information Systems  
May 25, 2006

Revised in March 2006 using new SLOSH model data from COE.



### Areas of Possible Flooding

- Category 1 Hurricane 00
- Category 2 Hurricane 06
- CJ** Category 3 Hurricane 06
- Category 4 Hurricane 06
- CJ Water

### SLOSH MODEL SURGE VALUES (regional elevation)

- Cat1 5.1
- Cat2 8.3
- Cat3 10.9
- Cat4 13.4

This map was derived from data developed and produced by the Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District. It is made available to Delmarva Peninsula state and local government emergency management and other interested agencies as a preview of inundation areas that will be used in hurricane evacuation traffic modeling. Areas of possible flooding are based on the overlay of maximum SLOSH Model storm surges on available ground elevation data.

This map has been developed as a planning tool for the Talbot County Emergency Management Agency.