

Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021

Mayor's Update

Heavy, perhaps even torrential, rain is coming our way according to the forecasting service the City of Newton uses to provide specific, detailed information for Newton. The rain started and will increase in intensity with the heaviest falling between midnight and 8:00 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday.



The most up to date information this afternoon shows the remnants of Hurricane Ida dropping a total of 3 to 5 inches of rain on Newton with the possibility of up to 7 inches in some areas, and sustained winds of 15 to 25 miles an hour and gusts up to 35 mph. This in turn means potential flooding in low lying areas, trees and limbs coming down, and/or power outages.

In the words of our Department of Public Works Commissioner Jim McGonagle, “All of this is concerning.”

The morning commute could be impacted. Our team and I are meeting at 5:00 a.m. tomorrow to determine whether City Hall, the Newton Free Library, the Senior Center and our schools (where teachers are preparing for the start of the year) will delay opening to allow for any clean up. Check the City’s website, [Newtonma.gov](https://www.newtonma.gov), where the information will be posted and updated.

What I’ve learned is that it’s not only the amount of rain that causes flooding issues, it’s the intensity. That’s what caused the flash flooding at Albemarle Road two weeks ago when rain fell so fast it had nowhere to go and made the road impassible. Once the heavy rain stopped, the water receded within 15 minutes.

Tonight’s forecast is for the heaviest rain to fall at a rate of about .5 inch per hour. If this holds (and our fingers are crossed), we’ll likely still see some flooding, but not to the levels we’d see if it falls at 1 inch or more per hour.

We pay close attention to the weather forecast because we do a lot of preparation before rain, snow, wind, heat or extreme cold hits.

In this case, our crews started preparing on Monday. Using a survey map, Department of Public Works crews cleared catch basins in low-lying areas across the City – including at Albemarle Road in Newtonville, Homer Street in Newton Centre, and Border Street in West Newton. They made sure our pump stations are prepped and staffed and that barricades, sandbags and pumps are ready if needed. Additional personnel have been added.

The Emergency Operations Center at Fire Headquarters will open at midnight. Trucks are ready to block flooded streets if needed. The Fire Department has crews

ready to help with flooding, downed wires and other emergencies. Customer Service is ready to answer calls from residents through the night. Police dispatchers will be answering calls and sending the help that's needed. Police Officers will be on patrol as always, and the Forestry Department staff and contractors are ready to clear broken branches or downed trees first thing tomorrow morning as soon as its light out. Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti is in communication with Eversource regarding power outages.

While these are our short term emergency steps, we are making the investments to make Newton more resilient to our increasingly dramatic weather events. Our own City of Newton [Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan](#), our [20 year Stormwater Improvement plan](#), and our [Climate Action Plan](#) as well as the modeling work by Weston & Sampson identify actions we are taking to prevent flooding, address extreme heat and build resiliency.

If you need assistance during the storm, please call Customer Service at 617-796-1000 or use the 311 app on your smart phone or computer.

As always, in an emergency, call 911.

If you lose power, report it directly to Eversource [here](#), or call 877-659-6326 and stay away from any downed wires.

Consider clearing any catch basins near your home.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller | 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459

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