

September flooding causes \$64 million in damage

By Beth Petrowske, MnDOT Newsline, Oct. 13, 2010.



Water covers a flood-damaged section of Hwy 169 a few miles north of St. Peter. *Photo by Thomas Zimmerman*

Heavy rains totaling 6 to 10 inches bombarded southern Minnesota Sept. 22, causing major flooding and resulting in damage estimated at \$64.1 million.

“Fall flooding is a not what we expect, but once again Mn/DOT personnel stepped up,” said Steve Lund, state maintenance engineer. “Whether it was our front line responders or the many supporting functions, Mn/DOT’s efforts were impressive—something we can all be proud of.” Employees worked night and day with county and city engineers to create detour routes and direct traffic as conditions rapidly worsened. Sign crews literally ran out of signs because so many were needed to post detour routes and other emergency information. “We witnessed a history-making flood with record-high water levels—and thankfully with no fatalities,” said Wes Smith, District 6 West Maintenance superintendent. “I have never seen rivers rise as fast, nor such a large geographic area inundated with so much water.”

During a 24- to 36-hour period, there were 95 state and local roads closed in southeastern Minnesota. Nearly a dozen state roads were closed in District 7 due to flash flooding, according to Rebecca Arndt, District 7 public affairs coordinator. By the time the water receded and the roads reopened, nine roads again had to be closed near the Minnesota River when it began to flood. The Minnesota River crested above the 1965 record in the Henderson area and came close to the historical crest in Mankato.

“The river rose and receded quickly, but had high velocity,” Arndt said. “We had a variety of damage—shoulders washed away, a railing broke off of a historic bridge when a tree hit it, a 200-foot section of Hwy 169 washed out and collapsed, then the bituminous overlay peeled away from the concrete and floated into the median.” Water covered several roads in District 8. A shoulder washout occurred on Hwy 14 near Lamberton. In addition, the southern portion of the Hwy 59 project south of Clarkfield may be delayed until next year due to flooding.

In the Twin Cities metro area, rising water from the Minnesota River flooded Hwy 101 in Shakopee and Hwy 41 in Chaska. Water from the river also necessitated construction of a protective dike along northbound I-35W near the river crossing and on both sides of eastbound Hwy 101 in Savage, just east of Hwy 169. Hwy 101 remained closed until Oct. 12.

In addition to maintenance staff, many others aided in the relief efforts, including Public Affairs employees and Emergency Management staff. Kristine Hernandez and Jessica Wiens, District 6 Public Affairs, served as public information officers for Wabasha County Flood Relief as part of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management deployment. Their biggest challenge was providing consistent and up-to-date messages to the public. Employees from the Emergency Management Section and staff from the Federal Highway Administration Emergency Repair Program visited several flooded areas in District 6 to assess whether Mn/DOT would be eligible for federal emergency funding.

“Mn/DOT needed to show FHWA staff that we had at least \$700,000 in damage to qualify for federal funds,” said Craig Strand, Emergency Management Section. “We visited several sites, including the Olmsted County Road 18 bridge near Oronoco where the entire [north bridge approach](#) washed away—the destruction was unbelievable.”