

Updated 9/08/03

Appendix J
FLOODING DEFINITIONS

<u>Degree</u>	<u>General Description</u>
No Flooding	No flooding is expected
Minor Flooding	Near flood stage - only minimal damage expected
Moderate Flooding	Secondary road blocked; transfer to higher elevations necessary to save property; some evacuations may be required
Major Flooding	Extensive inundation and damage; many primary roads and bridges closed; many people evacuated
Near Record Flood	Major flooding is expected to approach the record flood stage
Record Flood	Major flooding which is expected to exceed the record flood

NWS

2. Definitions.

Action Stage - the stage which, when reached by a rising stream, represents the level where the NWS or a customer/partner needs to take some type of mitigation action in preparation for possible significant hydrologic activity. The appropriate action is usually defined in a weather forecast office (WFO) hydrologic services manual. Could be the same as forecast issuance stage.

Alert Stage - the stage which, when reached by a rising stream, represents the level where need-to-know officials (e.g., county sheriff, civil defense officials, or bypass gate operators) are notified of the threat of possible flooding. (Used if different from action stage, and at the discretion of the WFO or river forecast center [RFC].) The term "alert stage" is to be used instead of "warning stage." The term "monitor stage" may be used instead of "alert stage" in some parts of the country.

Bankfull Stage - an established gage height at a given location along a river or stream, above which a rise in water surface will cause the river or stream to overflow the lowest natural stream bank somewhere in the corresponding reach. The term "lowest bank" is however, not intended to apply to an unusually low place or a break in the natural bank through which the water inundates a small area. Not necessarily the same as flood stage.

Forecast Issuance Stage - the stage which, when reached by a rising stream, represents the level where RFCs need to begin issuing forecasts for a non-routine (flood-only) forecast point. This stage is coordinated between WFO and RFC personnel and is not necessarily the same as action or alert stage. The needs of WFO/RFC customers and partners are considered in determining this stage.

Flood Stage - an established gage height at a given location above which a rise in water surface level is defined as a flood for the corresponding river or stream reach. Flood stage is usually set at a level where the river or stream begins to overflow its banks and create a potential hazard to lives, property, or commerce. Flood stage may equal or exceed bankfull stage but should rarely be less than bankfull stage.

The flood categories used in the NWS are:

Minor flooding - minimal or no property damage, but possibly some public threat or inconvenience.

Moderate Flooding - some inundation of structures and roads near

stream. Some evacuations of people and/or transfer of property to higher elevations is necessary.

Major Flooding - extensive inundation of structures and roads.

Significant evacuations of people and/or transfer of property to higher elevations.

Record Flooding - flooding which equals or exceeds the highest stage or discharge at a given site during the period of record keeping.

http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/010/operation_services.htm