

Frequently Asked Questions about how PacifiCorp manages the Lewis River during potential floods

How does PacifiCorp operate the Lewis River Project during high run off events?

- While the available storage in the Lewis River reservoirs is sufficient to capture some storm water from many small to medium-sized events, some floods, especially large floods, exceed the limited available storage capability of the reservoirs. As a result, river releases below Merwin can be forced to high levels due to flooding events within the basin.
- The company's operators work closely with the National Weather Service's River Forecast Center. The River Forecast Center monitors developing weather conditions, flows from the East and North forks of the Lewis River, other smaller tributaries and conditions in the Lower Columbia River as a means of forecasting overall river conditions into the project. Flow releases from Merwin dam is but one component that the River Forecast Center considers when determining flood stage of the Lewis River at Woodland.
- When a high flow event occurs or is forecasted, PacifiCorp operates strictly according to a federally (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) approved operating plan to manage high flow events. Among other things, the company is required during flood season to dedicate 70,000 acre-feet of storage space in Project reservoirs to absorb a high flow event. This equivalent to 17 vertical feet of combined drawdown from the storage reservoirs at Merwin, Yale and Swift. When storm water inflow forces the project to fill above that level, Merwin outflows are managed according to the federally approved operations plan. Because flooding can be expected downstream of Merwin during these events, the main focus of river and emergency management at this point is on public notification.

How does PacifiCorp coordinate with public safety officials to respond to floods? What are their respective roles and responsibilities to notify the public?

- PacifiCorp meets regularly with local emergency response agencies to ensure our readiness to respond to flooding conditions. Each year we hold a Lewis River Flood Planning meeting and we participate in Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meetings.

Lewis River High Flow Information Resources

Lewis River Flows below Merwin Dam:

Go to the [USGS National Water Dashboard](https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/) at <https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/>
Find a place: 14220500 (USGS Ariel Gage)

National Weather Service

Portland Forecast Office:
503-261-9246 or
<https://www.weather.gov/pqr/>

NOAA Weather Radio:

Frequency 162.525 or Channel 6
Station ID: WNG-604

Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency:

Sign up for emergency, flood and evacuation alerts at ClarkPublicAlerts.org

Cowlitz County Emergency Management:

Sign up for emergency, flood and evacuation alerts at <https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/196/Emergency-Management>

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- PacifiCorp's role in a high flow event is to notify the National Weather Service of releases from Merwin Dam. PacifiCorp also informs local emergency response agencies of high run-off events that might have an impact on the public. These agencies are notified through 911 centers; they will evaluate the information and execute response plans as necessary. Emergency response agencies are responsible for warning and evacuating the public.

As a resident of the Lewis River basin, how can I be advised of river flow conditions? Will I be notified in some manner to evacuate? How will I be notified?

- See the green inset on this page. This lists several sources of information about weather and river conditions. During high run-off events, public safety officials strongly encourage riverside residents to keep their eye on the river and to monitor these information sources.
- Local public safety officials are responsible for warning and evacuating residents if necessary. Once notification of an event has been given to your 911 center, by either the National Weather Service or PacifiCorp, local police and fire agencies will meet to act upon this information and design a plan for addressing the emergency.
- If public safety officials decide that evacuation is necessary they will coordinate the rapid notification of impacted residents. These officials may come to your door, or they may use special warning systems such as the Emergency Alert System, which issues warnings over radio and TV broadcast, or they may use the Emergency Community Notification System, which sends the warning to your telephone.