



Town of Gander

Flooding Fact Sheet

How bad was this storm?

Total rainfall recorded at Gander International Airport hit 125.8mm over the course of the event, including 68.2mm in the six-hour period from 9:30 p.m. Friday until 3:30 a.m. Saturday. That six-hour deluge represents the single heaviest downpour ever recorded at Gander. Overall, Gander received more than double the amount of precipitation forecast.

The official record for the day - which Environment Canada defines as 3:30 a.m. Friday through 3:30 a.m. Saturday - has been set at 119.2mm. The previous record for 24-hour rainfall was 98.3mm recorded on August 5, 1951. Environment Canada considers 103mm a once-in-100-years event.

At 56km long and 5km wide, Gander Lake rose by more than 2 metres over the weekend and was still rising on Tuesday, despite unrestricted outflow via Gander River.

What did the Town do to prepare for this event?

Beginning early Friday, Town workers checked all water and sewer infrastructure to identify any potential problems. The overflow gate at the Beaverwood Sewage Treatment Plant was partially opened in anticipation of heavy rain. At 8 p.m., the overflow gate was fully opened, still hours before the heaviest rainfall began, and remained fully open for the duration of the event. Staff remained on duty throughout the night, continuously monitoring infrastructure as the event progressed.

Why did the system suddenly back up, then drain just as quickly?

The sewer system has been constructed to meet all Provincial Government specifications and is more than adequate to handle higher-than-average rainfall. However, it does have a finite maximum output which, once reached, cannot be increased.

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As midnight Friday approached, runoff entering the system increased, far surpassing the maximum output. Once the maximum output was reached, this overage quickly filled roadside accesses, erupted through curbside grates and backed up into residential floor drains, bathtubs and toilets. Once the runoff entering the system dropped below the output capacity, the process reversed itself and the backed-up water drained as quickly as it rose, giving the illusion that a huge plug had been pulled. In fact, this was simply evidence of how much water moves efficiently through the system during normal operations.

How many homes experienced flooding and where were they located?

The Town received 106 reports of residential flooding, from homes located in every part of the community. The system-wide backup was not associated with any specific part of our infrastructure or any structural blockage or equipment failure.

Is the Town liable for damages incurred during this event?

Under Provincial law, the Town can only be held liable for damages in the event it is found to have been negligent in its actions. In this case, every possible measure was taken, and in a timely manner, to mitigate the possibility of flooding.

What should you do if your home was flooded?

Residents who experienced flooding are advised to document and photograph all damages to buildings and contents, and to contact their insurance company to initiate claims, even if a full assessment and inventory may take more time.

To assist affected homeowners, the Town of Gander will begin its previously scheduled Residential Clean-up a week early. This clean-up event will now span September 9-20, inclusive, with collection carried out on the day of residents' usual garbage collection during each week. Residential Clean-up rules and procedures are available in the Town's weekly Beacon ad and in PDF format on our website.