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Flash Flood Warnings Prompt Emergency Declarations in Northeast, Disrupting Travel

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Widespread heavy rainfall and flash flooding along the Eastern Seaboard prompted emergency declarations on Thursday from officials in New York and New Jersey, significantly impacting rail and air travel across the region.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New Jersey's Acting Governor Tahesha Way issued states of emergency in response to severe weather threatening densely populated areas from the Washington, D.C.–Baltimore corridor up through Philadelphia, Wilmington, Newark, and the New York City metropolitan area. The National Weather Service (NWS) issued flash flood warnings throughout the affected zones, while severe thunderstorm watches were in place along much of the Interstate 95 corridor.

Although meteorologists noted that the immediate flood threat had begun to ease by Thursday evening, the storm had already caused significant disruptions. Commercial flight operations were heavily impacted. According to FlightAware, a flight tracking service, at least 1,170 flights were canceled across the eight major airports serving the Northeast, including Washington Dulles, Baltimore-Washington, Ronald Reagan National, Philadelphia, Newark Liberty, LaGuardia, John F. Kennedy International, and Boston Logan. Hundreds more flights experienced delays.

Rail service was also affected. Amtrak reported a temporary suspension of service between Philadelphia and Wilmington due to flooding on the tracks. Although operations resumed approximately two hours later, the company warned of ongoing delays due to residual effects of the storm.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather Prediction Center, approximately 37 million residents across the mid-Atlantic and Northeast were at risk from excessive rainfall, with a 40% or higher chance of flash flooding. Forecasts projected up to five inches of rain in concentrated areas of New York City, Long Island, and the Hudson River Valley, with hourly rates potentially surpassing two inches.

Governor Hochul urged residents to remain alert and exercise caution, emphasizing the seriousness of the storm. "I am urging all New Yorkers to stay vigilant, stay informed, and use caution as we expect excessive rainfall with the potential for flash flooding," she stated.

New Jersey's acting governor, Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, echoed similar concerns, warning residents to remain indoors and avoid unnecessary travel. Her statement noted that rainfall could generally total between one and three inches, with some areas experiencing as much as five to seven inches. Way is serving in the governor's capacity while Governor Phil Murphy is out of state on vacation.

According to the NWS, the storm activity was driven by a cold front combining unstable air masses with high levels of atmospheric moisture, creating ideal conditions for intense, localized rainfall.

As clean-up and recovery efforts begin, transportation agencies and emergency officials continue to monitor weather patterns and advise the public to stay cautious in the face of potential flash flooding.