

Officials brace for historic flooding

by UPI

FARGO, N.D. -- Cities in North Dakota and Minnesota prepared for the worst Thursday after officials learned the Red River was expected to crest higher than predicted.

The National Weather Service forecast the Red River would crest Saturday at 41 feet in the Fargo, N.D., area, which saw a devastating flood in 1997 when the Red River crested at 39.7 feet.

The threat of flooding from other rivers in North Dakota has prompted evacuations but it is the predicted historic crest of the Red River that has officials on edge, CNN said.

"Nobody that's alive today has ever seen it at 41 feet," said Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker. "They need to take this extremely seriously."

Walaker said it's only "smart" for city officials and residents to consider worst-case scenarios, including a citywide evacuation, because the predicted crest puts the area in "uncharted territory."

A general call for volunteers went out Wednesday to help fill another 1,000-2,000 sandbags.

Elsewhere in the floodplain, officials have called for voluntary evacuations, The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead reported.

Clay County, Minn., Commissioner Kevin Campbell said there's a push to move some residents to higher ground.

"If you have someone who is sick, if you've got young children, you really need to find another place for them," he said.

Members of the Minnesota and North Dakota congressional delegations on Wednesday updated U.S. President Barack Obama on the situation. Obama has pledged the federal government would support the area.

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