

Lutheran Disaster Response Update February 2022

As 2021 drew to a close several counties in the state of Washington were hit by atmospheric rivers. Clallam, Skagit, and Whatcom counties were hit the hardest. Roads, bridges, public water systems, and public transportation were all affected. In Whatcom County more than 100 structures were destroyed and 500 homes damaged. Many people found themselves displaced to shelters. Governments, local nonprofits, and civic groups waited patiently for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to set up shop and start writing checks to assist the communities in getting back on their feet.

The State of Washington provided aid to Whatcom County. However, the combination of State, County, City, and homeowner insurance funds is not enough to meet all of the needs of the communities. Much of the damage is not covered by insurance because it is categorized as flood damage and not everyone carries flood insurance.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) partners with other organizations as part of Washington Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (WAVOAD). WAVOAD was tasked to help provide for some needs. More than 150 homes lost their furnace ductwork which will not be repaired until at least April, due to supply chain issues. LDR was asked to provide 125 oil-filled electric space heaters. The Southwestern Washington Synod, with funds released by Bishop Rick Jaech, provided 85 of these heaters. Our friends and partners at the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia will provide an additional 40.

The heaters were picked up last week by volunteers of Whatcom Strong, a brand-new community organization, with Whatcom Emergency Management Office overseeing the process. Catholic Community Services will be doing the case management and the heaters will be distributed out of two locations, the Adventist church in Everson and the community center in Sumas. A long-term recovery committee is being formed to get all of the unmet needs of these communities addressed.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support for these communities in need.