1972 FLOOD

the June day that changed our history
A DAY OF HEAVY THUNDERSTORMS

• Dense Fog in the morning
• Two areas of thunderstorms converged during the afternoon
• To many it seemed like just another day

Photo taken at Rapid City Police Department Headquarters the morning of June 9th, 1972. Another seemingly normal day to most, with rain in the forecast.
THE WATER KEPT COMING

- By 6pm, a nearly continuous line of storms covered the Black Hills
- Between 9:15pm until 11:15pm the water level rose 12 feet in two hours
- 10:45pm Canyon Lake Dam fails
• 238 PEOPLE WERE KILLED
• 3000+ WERE INJURED
• 1335 HOMES DESTROYED
• 5000 AUTOMOBILES DESTROYED
• $160 MILLION DAMAGE
• 15 OF 23 BRIDGES OVER RAPID CREEK WERE DESTROYED

$939 million in 2017 dollars
WHAT WE LEARNED
What We Learned

The Earth has been experiencing changes forever & it wasn't a disaster until people moved in.
WHAT WE LEARNED

WATER IS A SERIOUS THREAT ESPECIALLY WITH MOVEMENT AND FORCE BEHIND IT

IT WILL CONTINUE TO FLOW AND RAVAGE THINGS IN IT'S PATH
FLOOD RECOVERY-JUNE 11, 1972

- At first the push was to rebuild and put things back where they were following the disaster.
- Leonard Swanson, RC Public Works Director stated "We cannot sentence the survivors to one more night near the creek in the suicidal floodplain."
- Rapid City would never permit homes near the creek to be repaired and occupied again.
THE WATER WILL KEEP COMING

- Rapid City and Black Hills are extremely susceptible to flooding
- National Weather Service improved warnings and capabilities in the Rapid City office
- MetWarn System put into place monitoring rainfall and rises in streams, Apr - Oct
METWARN

https://waterdata.usgs.gov/sd/nwis/rt/
WHAT WE LEARNED

TRAINED RESCUE RESPONDERS

- In 1972 a Search and Rescue teams didn't exist
- PCSAR was started in 1973, largely due to the flood
- Specifically trained and equipped for rescue operations
- Currently 29 volunteers are trained to respond to rescues of all kinds
WHAT WE LEARNED

TRAINED RESCUE RESPONDERS

- In 1972 the Water Rescue Team didn't exist
- Rapid City-Pennington County Team was formed in 1987
- Today it's made up of 16 members from RCFD, RCPD, PCSO & PCSAR, personnel are trained to respond to water-related rescues and dive operations
In 1972 there were 463 acres of park land in Rapid City. Now there are over 1700 acres.

Bike path was renamed in 2009, Leonard Swanson Memorial Pathway following his death in 2008.
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND

1/2 cent sales tax implemented after the flood to help revitalize the flood-disaster area. Now we all benefit from the tax now called the "Vision Fund." Some of the projects include:

- 1995: Journey Museum, Jimmy Hilton Pool, Visitor Information Center
- 2000: Roosevelt Park, Pool, & Ice Rink, West and South Middle School Gym/Community Center, Hwy 16 Fire Station
- 2005: Skyline Drive Preservation, Soccer Complex, Civic Center Ice Arena
- 2010: Main Street Square, Airport Terminal Expansion, Canyon Lake Dam Reconstruction
- 2017: Rural America Initiatives Community Center, SDSM&T Field and Beautification of Corridor, Premier Adolescent Care Center
HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE
45 YEARS LATER

- Jurisdictions along Rapid Creek continue to restrict development in flood-prone areas.
- The further we get from 1972, the more people forget and want to develop in the flood-prone areas.
- It's important that no one "sleeps" in the flood plain area.
"THAT LAND IS THERE BECAUSE PEOPLE DIED. IT WAS PURCHASED AT THE MOST PRECIOUS PRICE... WE NEED TO PROTECT THAT LEGACY."

-Don Frankenfeld, a founding member of the Friends of Rapid City Parks.
WHAT CAN YOU DO

- Make a Plan
- Know the Hazards in our area. What affects PennCo the most?

SPRING/SUMMER STORMS, HAIL, FLOODING, TORNADO, LIGHTNING, WINTER STORMS
BUILD AN EMERGENCY KIT

- Water - one gallon per person, per day
- Nonperishable Food - 3 day supply per person, canned goods, energy bars
- Flashlight - and extra batteries
- Radio - battery-powered, have extra batteries on hand
- First Aid Kit - bandages, antiseptic, ointment, gloves, gauze
- Tools - pliers, whistle - to signal for help, can opener for canned goods
- Hygiene Basics - toilet paper, soap, hand sanitizer, garbage bags for sanitation
- Documents - copies of social security cards, insurance info, prescription lists, phone numbers
- Clothes - one set for each person, include sturdy shoes
- Money - cash or traveler’s checks

A ROLLING SUITCASE IS A GREAT THING TO CONTAIN YOUR KIT.
STAY ALERT WITH EMERGENCY MESSAGING

- Outdoor Warning Sirens
- Weather Radio All Hazard
- Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)
- Emergency Alert System (EAS)
- NEW---Public Warning Messages

Learn more about emergency messaging at www.rcpcem.com
PREPAREDNESS IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. IT TAKES A WHOLE COMMUNITY.

MAKE A PLAN - BUILD A KIT - GET INVOLVED
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