News



Cars lay mangled along Wheeling Creek in Ohio County, W.Va., June 14, 2025, after flash floods devastated the area. The flooding caused by torrential rains killed at least eight people in northern West Virginia, including a 3-year-old child. As of June 18, one person was still missing. Authorities have begun to assess damage to roads, bridges, natural gas lines and other infrastructure. (OSV News/The Catholic Spirit/Courtesy of Trisha Shriver Conrad)

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Wheeling, W.Va. — June 19, 2025

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Bishop Mark Brennan of Wheeling-Charleston is asking for prayers after flash floods devastated communities in Ohio County June 14 leaving eight people dead, including a 3-year-old child. As of June 18, one person was still missing.

"I ask you to join me in prayer for all those affected by the devastating flash flood that occurred on Saturday in Ohio County," Brennan said in a statement. "We pray especially for those who lost their lives as well as those who are still missing."

The hardest hit communities were Triadelphia and Valley Grove where homes, cars, businesses and roads were washed away.

At a press conference in Wheeling June 18, West Virginia Gov. Patrick Morrisey said that he had just learned that an eighth victim had been found. The victim is a male, but his identity has not been released. The flood victims ranged in age from 3 to 74.

At a press conference the previous day, Ohio County Sheriff Chief Deputy Kent Lewis called it the "largest mass casualty" in Ohio County, which began late in the evening of June 14 as torrential rains began to fall in the region.

Flood waters quickly rose to engulf communities along U.S. Highway 40, Middle Wheeling Creek, Little Wheeling Creek, as well as runs and streams. All of these feed into Wheeling Creek, which rose from 3 feet at 8:45 p.m. to roughly 10 feet at 10:15 p.m. that evening, according to The Weather Channel.

As the danger became apparent, residents took to social media to warn their neighbors. Around 9:30 p.m., Matt Koval, a parishioner of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in the Elm Grove suburb of Wheeling, posted to Facebook: "Folks in the Wheeling area, if you are in a safe place STAY THERE. Vehicles are getting washed away with people in them."

St. Vincent's parishioner and Triadelphia resident Tammy Rosenthal and her family witnessed the horror as it unfolded. After reaching safety at a gas station in the town, she stood with her husband Tom and their sons Trevor, 23, and Trenton, 17, along with neighbors feeling helpless at what they were seeing.

"We watched at least four or five vehicles … going down the creek with their headlights and their taillights on and just praying that nobody was in them," Rosenthal told The Catholic Spirit, Wheeling-Charleston's diocesan news outlet.

Many made the sign of the cross as they saw them, she said.

As the water receded in the early morning hours of June 15, cars lay mangled in Wheeling Creek in Elm Grove among chunks of debris.

"I've been doing this for 35 years. I've seen major floods here in the city, in the county. I've never seen anything like this — the way it occurred," Lou Vargo, director of the Wheeling–Ohio County Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, said at a press conference in Wheeling the morning of June 15.

Joining him at a second press conference in the city a few hours later was Morrisey, who declared a state of emergency in Ohio County. He additionally declared a state of emergency in Marion County that day which also experienced severe flash flooding that led to the partial collapse of an apartment building in Fairmont. No deaths were reported but the area has suffered severe damage from the flooding.

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What Ohio County experienced on June 14 was a unicorn event, which is a rare weather phenomenon, the governor said at the June 15 press conference in Wheeling.

"A lot of the rain hit very narrow areas and there were roughly 3 to 4 inches of water that fell in the area in less than an hour," he said.

The severe weather in West Virginia was part of a storm system that also impacted other states, including Texas, where flash floods June 12 in San Antonio and Bexar County took at least 13 lives. News reports said more than 6 inches of rain fell in the San Antonio metro area. Those killed in the floods ranged from 28 to 67 years old.

Morrisey went on to report that 19 swiftwater rescues were conducted by the state's Division of Natural Resources which also used drones, UTVs, 4x4 vehicles, and dive teams in the rescue operation.

Also at the press conference was Maj. Gen. James Seward of the West Virginia National Guard, which Morrisey mobilized to support local emergency operations. Seward then joined the governor in Triadelphia and Valley Grove to view the devastation which left more than 12 roads and 3 bridges closed in the city and county.

Deacon Thomas McFadden, permanent deacon at St. Vincent's and Our Lady of Seven Dolors Mission in Triadelphia, spoke to The Catholic Spirit echoing the bishop's call for prayers for those affected by the flooding and encouraging all to "reach out to others in need and offer any assistance."

Area residents and businesses have been stepping up and answering the call for help since the disaster occurred, and Rosenthal said the Triadelphia community is overwhelmed with emotion and gratitude.

"There were so many people down here volunteering from companies, businesses, local people that said … 'I'm going to come help,'" she said. "There are local athletes down here helping, there's a paving company down here trying to remove all the mud with their equipment. There have been numerous organizations coming down bringing cleaning supplies, food, just offering a hand. It's honestly amazing."

Staff from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling took their heavy equipment out to Triadelphia to volunteer with debris removal efforts on U.S. Highway 40 (National Road). Diocesan employees at the chancery have been volunteering in relief efforts as well.

St. Vincent's announced on Facebook that it is collecting items for those in need and asked residents to let the parish know of anyone that needs assistance. The parish school donated water, food, and leftover supplies from its festival which took place on the night of the flood to support families in need.

Wheeling Central Catholic High School and Wheeling Park High School boys' basketball teams announced they will play a flood relief benefit game June 25 at 6:30 p.m. with all monetary donations collected going to the Triadelphia and Valley Grove Volunteer Fire departments.

During the flooding, the Triadelphia Volunteer Fire Department's building sustained significant damage.

Other parishes in the area are doing their part by collecting donations of needed items such as cleaning products for flood relief efforts as well.

Brennan has approved a special collection for flood victims to be held in parishes and missions of the diocese's Wheeling vicariate the weekends of June 21-22 and June 28-29.

"As our community mourns together, I am encouraged by those who have already come forward, including our diocesan employees, to assist in the relief efforts as well as the first responders who continue to assist the victims of this horrific event," Brennan said in his statement. "I encourage all who are able to serve as the hands of Christ to assist our neighbors in need."