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## NEWS

### Pataki urges caution, patience

By [Liz Hacken](#)

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BINGHAMTON -- The Susquehanna River lapped at the deck of the pedestrian bridge at Confluence Park as Gov. George E. Pataki warned that the worst of the flooding was likely to come.

"The fact that the sun is shining doesn't mean the worst is behind us," he said.

Earlier Wednesday, Pataki declared a state disaster emergency for nine counties, including Broome, Chenango, Delaware and Tioga counties.

Pataki and State Sen. Thomas W. Libous, R-Binghamton, spent much of Wednesday touring the flood-ravaged areas of Broome and Tioga counties by helicopter. They later met with volunteers and evacuees at Binghamton University's Events Center.

"It's bad everywhere," Libous said.

After the governor declares a state disaster emergency, more state resources, such as help from the National Guard, can be deployed to the disaster area. Federal help could be called in at the governor's request after the damage is assessed, according to the state Office of Emergency Management.

Pataki activated the National Guard on Tuesday evening to help with evacuation and engineering. As of Wednesday morning, 125 National Guard soldiers were deployed, and more are expected as additional citizen soldiers respond to the call, Pataki said. Five Guard aircraft -- two medivac Hueys, two Blackhawks and a Chinook -- are assisting in rescue operations.

Federal leaders were looking ahead to securing long-term help for the area. U.S. Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey, D-Hurley, asked Pataki to request a major disaster declaration from President George W. Bush, which would clear the way for federal emergency funds.

Assemblywoman Donna A. Lupardo, D-Endwell, said she also contacted federal representatives about help down the road, but the immediate focus for everyone was ensuring peoples' safety.

"Right now, we're in the basic phase of trying to protect life," Lupardo said.