



Dear Community Members,

I wanted the opportunity to provide the community at large with an update on the incident that occurred at our Marlborough Homes Senior Housing property in the late afternoon on Friday, January 10th, 2025. I will try to keep this as succinct as possible while providing enough details to warrant calling this “an update”.

What happened?

We are working with building experts and engineers to identify the issue with the sprinkler system pipe, which seemed to be the original source of what became a building-wide flood that caused extensive water damage and the need to immediately evacuate the residents.

The Marlborough Fire Department, SCS staff, ServPro, and others worked through the evening to implement an emergency response.

Where did the residents go?

We immediately began tracking each household and any pets to make sure that hotel rooms were secured for any residents who needed them; some folks stayed with family or friends initially and some additional hotel rooms were added a day or two later if needed. We worked with the Monadnock Humane Society to foster one cat and found a private foster placement for the other cat that needed somewhere to go. We were able to secure a hotel room for one tenant with a dog at a hotel that accepts them. Our most immediate and pressing concern was the safety of our residents.

Is it true that they couldn't access their units after that?

Yes. I think it's important when a decision is made that the person making it owns that decision. I made the decision to limit access to the building.

This was done for several reasons:

- Initially, we were unsure of the structural integrity of the building because it was dark, cold, and there was water everywhere. It had even flowed onto the walkways and parking lot which quickly turned into sheets of ice.
- Mitigation experts worked late into the night and early the next morning to get most of the water out of the building and there were many cords and machines set up throughout the entire building.
- I could not risk slip and falls, or trip and falls, when we already had an emergency situation to deal with.
- In addition to that, it didn't take long to realize that there were going to be air quality issues. Water is insidious in situations like this, and it doesn't take long for bacteria to grow.
- Lastly, in addition to health and safety, we had to keep the building secure and that meant allowing access for critical personnel only: SCS staff as well as licensed, vetted, and insured professionals.





Having said that, I want to share three action steps taken to minimize the impact of the units being inaccessible:

1. Staff contacted individual residents to start collecting lists of important items they needed and retrieving those items from units.
2. We also provided gift cards for items folks might need to be able to pick up such as reading glasses, food, socks, etc. Those activities took place throughout the weekend and early this week.
3. We are now scheduling a day for residents to be able to go to their units, accompanied by staff and with masks available to address the ongoing concern related to air quality, to be able to assess their belongings and to have that closure before things that are salvageable are moved and stored for mitigation and construction. Much of this activity will be individualized according to each household's needs.

We then held a meeting with residents midday on Wednesday to provide additional information and to take care of several things. This meeting was well attended, and we were able to cover a lot of topics during that time.

How long will it take to recover?

We can't make any definitive statements about this while we are still determining with the insurance company, contractors, etc. what the scope of work will be in its entirety, but we have been using the timeframe of "six to twelve months".

This is not set in stone but gives us some sense of how to approach next steps as we move from the emergency phase to the longer-term planning phase. While we do not want people displaced any longer than necessary and that gives the situation a sense of urgency, we also need to make sure we do our due diligence that severe water damage requires so that the long-term health of residents and the long term sustainability of the building is ensured.

What happens now?

We have SCS staff, including our Resident Services Coordinator, meeting with individual households to determine their relocation plans during this time period. This will include identifying those with renter's insurance in place (which will help significantly with ongoing costs), identifying possible apartment units and assisting with paperwork to access those units, working with community partners related to other resources beyond housing, and more.

Our intent is to provide a safe hotel room, in the short term, for those who need it during this transition, while more definitive and longer-term plans are solidified for the six to twelve months we estimate needing.

We know that the large majority of the residents just want to "go home" and that is the big picture goal.





Southwestern Community Services

People helping people in Cheshire and Sullivan Counties since 1965

In Summary

SCS has over 60 buildings and facilities and while we have had our fair share of smaller incidents over the decades of facility management (a tub overflowing, windows left open causing burst pipes, etc.), this is not something that we have experienced and it has been an intense period of time - for the residents and for the staff.

The Marlborough Homes community is just that - a community of folks who look out for each other and spend time together. Being separated, even temporarily, while worrying about their housing, their pets, and each other, and while having their daily routines completely disrupted, is an overwhelming experience.

Despite that, our residents have maintained a sense of calm and most importantly, have placed their trust in us that we will not let them down - even when some days are particularly tough for them.

We will do our due diligence as stewards of the building and will work through the many details and steps with our housing oversight teams, insurance companies, contractors, and community partners to get Marlborough Homes back to the beautiful building it was. At the same time, we will walk through this with the Marlborough Homes residents to ensure that during this period of time, they know that they are not alone.

Of course, all of our other work continues as well - Fuel Assistance applications, WIC clinics, bus routes in Sullivan County, and so much more that has dedicated teams keeping up with all of the other things that must continue while some teams are laser focused on this project.

We have several entities to thank as time goes on as well and we will be publicly thanking many folks as we provide additional updates to the community.

I am very proud of the SCS staff that have worked countless hours to try to address things, both large and small, on a daily basis throughout this event. Answering calls, responding to emails, asking good questions, running back and forth to the property, documenting everything, and so much more. It can be challenging to tend to more technical aspects of the situation while also maintaining a sense of compassion and attention to detail. I couldn't be any more grateful than I am for all of them.

Any donations to help offset the costs of hotel stays and other expenses that the agency is taking on would be greatly appreciated. Donations can be made by going to any Savings Bank of Walpole location or by visiting our website and click on the Donate button. While we are usually there to step in during an emergency - the Alstead floods, all of our work during COVID, etc. - this is an emergency we need to work through, and we intend to do that the best we can.

Thank you,
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