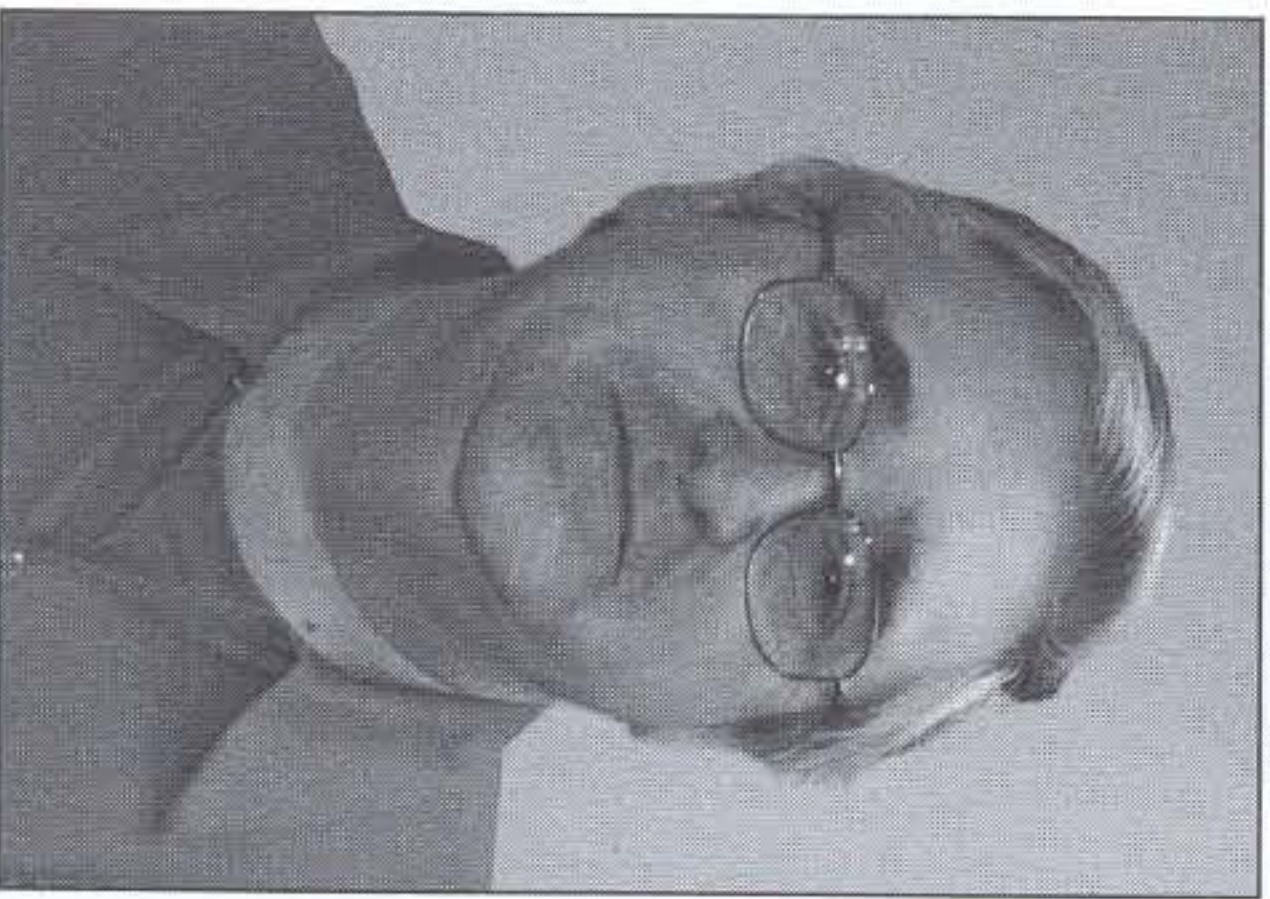


New Hampshire Public Works Mutual Aid Program

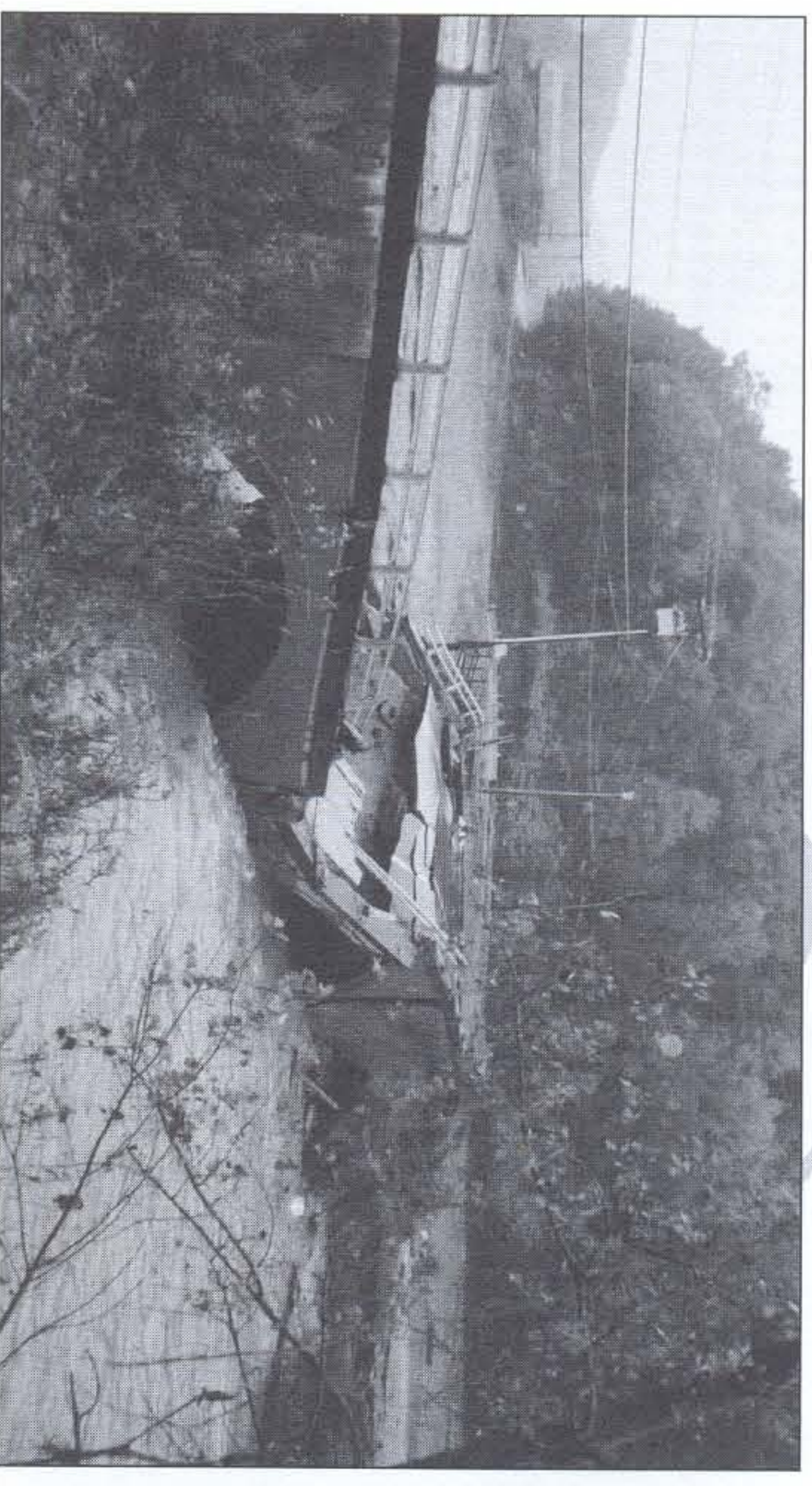
When severe flooding hit the Granite State during October 2005, Richard Lee, chair of the New Hampshire Public Works Mutual Aid Program (NHPWMAP) certainly had his hands full. Floodwaters washed out roads across the state, and rendered several communities virtually inaccessible due to collapsed bridges and damaged roadways. Not to mention the damage to homes and other property.

NHPWMAP shifted into high gear to assist members in need. Established in 1998, the organization's mission is to enable municipalities to share public works resources during emergency situations such as floods, ice storms or other large-scale disasters. Through the mutual aid program, member communities can send and receive equipment and staff to help get the job done quickly. As the first statewide public works mutual aid organization in the country, NHPWMAP started a trend that is beginning to catch on across the U.S.



This was the first time that the public works mutual aid system was activated for a major disaster since the program's inception, and the system proved to be a great success. "We'd been working on the details for several years, and it was rewarding to see it all come together as it should," said Lee. "The system worked, and it worked well."

The concept for the organization was developed after the ice storms that struck the state in 1998. Following the storm, New London was described as "virtually sealed off in a curtain of ice." As road agent for the Town of New London, Lee remembers the struggle of managing the disaster all too well. "We worked for about 80 hours a week for three weeks just getting roads open to two lanes of traffic. We could have done that in about a week and a half if we had been able to call more towns to help." Mutual Aid Agreements make it possible.



Route 123 in Walpole suffered several bridge collapses on Sunday, October 9, 2005. Photo courtesy the Town of Walpole.

As an LGC affiliate group, NHPWMAP receives support for communication and financial services, such as mailings and account management. One of the organization's key communication tools that LGC assists with is the *Mutual Aid Program Resource Binder*, containing contact lists, inventory sheets and mutual aid agreement templates. "As a volunteer organization, things such as financial services are difficult to manage," said Lee. "LGC takes care of the details for us, enabling us to focus on refining and improving the mutual aid system."

Thanks to NHPWMAP, New Hampshire communities have access to a network of support in time of crisis. For more information, contact NHPWMAP through the University of New Hampshire's T² Center at 800.423.0060 or visit www.t2.unh.edu/ma/.

See the January 2006 issue of *New Hampshire Town and City* magazine for an in-depth look at NHPWMAP and the October floods.