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**Media Contacts:**

Mark Miller, Administrator, Office of Public Information, 410-313-2022

## **Howard County limits access to Ellicott City's Main Street as two buildings near collapse**

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – Howard County Executive Allan H. Kittleman temporarily limited visits this afternoon by residents to Main Street Ellicott City after county structural engineers determined that two buildings in the flood-damaged area are facing imminent collapse.

The evolving safety concerns, which were identified around noon today, prompted a halt to scheduled visits that would have allowed residents to recover items from their homes. Once those safety issues are mitigated, those visits will be rescheduled.

"It would be unsafe to allow folks to return to their homes until the situation is stabilized," Kittleman said. "I won't allow anyone into those buildings until we are positive they are safe."

Bob Frances, director of the Department Inspections, Licensing and Permits, said these buildings earlier had been identified as being unsound structurally. Further evaluation determined that there was a "progressive collapse situation" in progress.

"I certainly hope this underscores the importance of the dynamic and unsafe situation we have here," said Frances.

County Department of Fire and Rescue Services Chief John Butler said a collapse could have a significant environmental impact, both from a hazardous dust release and debris from a falling building damming the flow of the Tiber Hudson watershed, leading to more flooding on Main Street.

"No one wants another injury or worse a death. That drives everything we do," said Butler. "We want the public to understand we will put safety before everything else."

County inspectors and Kittleman met this afternoon to determine the next steps. A handful of residents were allowed into their homes prior to the suspension of the scheduled visits but those visits were curtailed when structural engineers determined there were issues with buildings in the 8100 block of Main Street (Frederick Road).

## **Howard County suspends access to Ellicott City's Main Street as two buildings near collapse** (cont.)

Later in the day, county emergency personnel were able to secure a small section in the western end of the no access zone so that a few residents and businesses were able to enter their buildings to gather belongings.

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