

Prepare...



Because
You Care

Floods - Before, During, and After

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters and can occur nearly anywhere in the United States. The sheer force of just six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet. Cars are easily swept away in just two feet of water.

Flooding along rivers is a natural and inevitable part of life. Some floods occur seasonally when winter or spring rains, coupled with melting snows, fill river basins with too much water, too quickly. Winds from intense offshore storms can also drive ocean water inland and cause significant flooding. Escape routes can be cut off and blocked by high water.

The National Weather Service issues a "flood potential outlook" when forecast meteorological conditions indicate a significantly heavy precipitation episode may occur that would either cause flooding or aggravate existing high water or flooding. The "flood potential outlook" is generally issued 36 hours or more before the potential event. Persons along rivers should stay tuned to weather forecasts and be prepared to take action if necessary.

A "flood watch" is issued when meteorological conditions raise the threat of flooding, but occurrence is neither certain or imminent. A "flood watch" is generally issued 12 to 36 hours before the potential event. Persons along rivers should be prepared to take whatever actions are necessary and monitor the latest weather forecasts and potential flood information.

A "flood warning" is issued when flooding is expected within 12 hours or is in progress. Forecast crest information is provided for specific communities or areas along main stem rivers. A general flood warning is issued covering geographical areas beyond main stem rivers. Persons along these rivers should take action to protect lives and property immediately.

Before: The following are recommendations for before, during, and after a flood:

- Find out if you live in a flood-prone area and identify earthen, irrigation, hydro-electric, etc. dams, that are up stream from your area, and could be the source of potential problems.
- Ask your local emergency manager about official flood warning signals.
- Know the terms "Flood Watch", "Flood Warning", and "Urban and Small StreamWarning".
- Plan for evacuation.
- Consider purchasing flood insurance.
- Take steps to flood proof your home. Call your local building department or emergency management office for information.
- Keep all insurance policies and your household inventory in a safe place.

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- During:**
- Listen to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Weather Radio, local radio or television stations for local information.
 - Be aware of streams, drainage channels and areas known to flood suddenly.
 - If local authorities issue a flood watch, prepare to evacuate.
 - Secure your home. If time permits, secure items located outside the house.
 - If instructed, turn off utilities at the main switches or valves.
 - Fill your car fuel tank.
 - Fill the bathtub with water in case water becomes contaminated or services are cut off. Sterilize the bathtub first.
 - Stay away from flood waters.
 - When deep flooding is likely, permit the flood waters to flow freely into your basement to avoid structural damage to the foundation and the house.
 - Do not attempt to drive over flooded roads. The depth of water is not always obvious. The road bed may be washed out under the water, and you could be stranded or trapped.

- After:**
- Stay away from flood waters.
 - Stay away from moving water. Moving water six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
 - Be aware of areas where flood waters have receded and may have weakened road surfaces.
 - Stay away from and report downed power lines.
 - Stay away from disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers
 - Continue listening to the radio for information about where to get assistance
 - Consider health and safety needs. Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with flood waters.
 - Throw away food that has come in contact with flood waters.
 - Call your insurance agent.
 - Take photos of or videotape your belongings and your home.
 - Don't throw away damaged goods until an official inventory has been taken. Remember flood waters can be extremely dangerous. The best protection during a flood is to leave the area and go to shelter on higher ground.

For more information, contact your local emergency management office or call the state's Emergency management office:

(800) 562-6108