

# FLOODS



Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters. Flooding often occurs following a hurricane, thawing snow, or several days of sustained rain. Flash floods occur suddenly, due to rapidly rising water along a stream or low-lying area. Learn what to do to keep your loved ones safe

## Know the Difference!

1. **A flood/flash flood WATCH** means a flood or flash flood is possible.
2. **A flood/flash flood WARNING** means flooding or flash flooding is already occurring or will occur soon. **TAKE IMMEDIATE PRECAUTIONS!**

## Prepare in Advance

- Assemble an emergency preparedness kit
- Create a household evacuation plan that includes your pets
- Stay informed about your community's risk and response plans

### Protecting Your Family

- Talk with your family about what to do if a flood watch or warning is issued. Discussing floods ahead of time helps reduce fear, especially for younger children.
- Make sure you have access to NOAA radio broadcasts (online station, radio app in the Apple Store or Google Play or purchase a battery-powered or hand-crank NOAA radio)
- Keep insurance policies, documents, and other valuables in a safe place that is less likely to be damaged during a flood. Take pictures on a phone and keep copies of important documents and files on a flash drive that you can carry with you on your house or car keys.

### Protecting Your Pets & Animals

- Prepare a pet emergency kit for your companion animals.
- If installing or changing fence lines, consider placing them in such a way that your animals are able to move to higher ground in the event of flooding.

## Right before a Flood

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- Listen to local area radio, NOAA radio or TV stations for the latest information and updates.
  - Be prepared to evacuate quickly and know your routes and destinations.
  - Check your emergency kit and replenish any items missing or in short supply, especially medications or other medical supplies. Keep it nearby.

### Then, If You Can, Do This:

- Fill plastic bottles with clean water for drinking.
- Fill bathtubs and sinks with water for flushing the toilet or washing the floor or clothing.
- Fill your car's gas tank, in case you need to evacuate.

- Bring outdoor belongings, such as patio furniture, indoors.
- Turn off propane tanks to reduce the potential for fire.

#### **If You Still Have Time, Do This:**

- Move your furniture and valuables to higher floors of your home.
- Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities to prevent damage to your home or within the community. If you shut your gas off, a professional is required to turn it back on.
- Unplug small appliances to reduce potential damage from power surges that may occur.

## **During**

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#### **Staying Safe Indoors**

- Turn off the power and water mains if instructed to do so by local authorities.
- Boil tap water until water sources have been declared safe.
- Avoid contact with floodwater. It may be contaminated with sewage or contain dangerous insects or animals.
- Continue listening to local area radio, NOAA radio or TV stations for the latest information and updates.
- Don't use gas or electrical appliances that have been flooded.
- Dispose of any food that comes into contact with flood water.

#### **Staying Safe Outdoors**

- Don't walk, swim or drive through floodwater. Just six inches of fast-flowing water can knock you over and two feet will float a car.
- If caught on a flooded road with rapidly rising waters, get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground.
- Don't walk on beaches or riverbanks.
- Don't allow children to play in or near flood water.
- Avoid contact with floodwater. It may be contaminated with sewage or contain dangerous insects or animals.
- Stay out of areas subject to flooding. Underpasses, dips, low spots, canyons, washes, etc. can become filled with water.

## **Recovery**

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#### **After a Flood:**

- Let friends and family know you're safe.
- If evacuated, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Continue listening to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions.
- Keep children and pets away from hazardous sites and floodwater.
- Do not use water that could be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.
- Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control.
- Help people who require special assistance—infants, elderly people, those without transportation, large families who may need additional help in an emergency situation, people with disabilities, and the people who care for them.

#### **Returning Home Safely**

- Beware of snakes, insects and other animals that may be in or around your home.
- If power lines are down outside your home, do not step in puddles or standing water. Report them immediately to the power company.
- If any gas or electrical appliances were flooded, don't use them until they have been checked for safety.
- Dispose of any food that has come into contact with flood water.
- Take pictures of home damage, both of the buildings and its contents.

## **Cleaning and Repairing Your Home**

- Wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots, and be cautious when cleaning up.
- Learn more about how to clean up after a flood, including the supplies you'll need, how to sanitize food contact surfaces, and how to repair water damage.
- Be careful when moving furnishings or debris, because they may be waterlogged and heavier.
- Throw out items that absorb water and cannot be cleaned or disinfected. This includes mattresses, carpeting, cosmetics, stuffed animals and baby toys.
- Throw out all food, beverages and medicine exposed to flood waters and mud. When in doubt, throw it out. This includes canned goods, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and containers with food or liquid that has been sealed shut.
- Pump out flooded basements gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage. If the water is pumped out completely in a short period of time, pressure from water-saturated soil on the outside could cause basement walls to collapse.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are health hazards.

## **Ask a Professional to**

- Raise your furnace, water heater, and electric panel to higher floors if they are in areas of your home that may be flooded. This will prevent damage. An undamaged water heater may be your best source of fresh water after a flood.
- Install check valves in plumbing to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers such as levees, berms, and flood walls to stop floodwater from entering the building. Permission to construct such barriers may be required by local building codes.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage through cracks.