

FLOODING

Prolonged flooding from creeks and rivers, and flash flooding from rain swollen roads and waterways is a danger that too many people ignore each year – sometimes with fatal consequences. Many of the flood related rescues, injuries and fatalities have been a result of people in automobiles attempting to drive across a flooded road. Use the safety guidelines in the sections below to steer clear of flood related incidents.



BEFORE A FLOOD

Know the terms used to describe flood threats:

Flood Watch -- Flooding or flash flooding is possible. Be extremely cautious when driving – especially at night. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or commercial television for additional information.

Flood Warning -- Flooding is occurring or will occur soon – and is expected to occur for several days or weeks. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

Flash Flood Warning -- A flash flood is occurring or is imminent. NEVER drive across a flooded road – especially if the road is closed by barricades.

Flood Advisory -- Minor flooding of creeks and streams, streets, low-lying areas or basement flooding is occurring or is imminent.

- **Know how to shut off electricity, gas and water** at main switches and valves. Know where gas pilots are located and how the heating system works.
- **Have check valves installed in building sewer traps** to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains. As a last resort, use large corks or stoppers to plug showers, tubs or basins.
- **Consider measures for flood proofing your home.** Call your local building department or emergency management agency (EMA) for information.

- **Consider purchasing flood insurance.** Flood losses are not covered under homeowners insurance policies. Flood insurance is available in most communities through the National Flood Insurance Program. There is usually a period before it takes effect, so don't delay. Flood insurance is available whether the building is in or out of the identified flood-prone area. Call your insurance company for more information.
- **Insure your property and possessions.** Make an inventory of your possessions using paper lists, photographs and/or videotapes of your belongings. Leave a copy with your insurance company. Update your inventory and review your coverage with your insurance company periodically.
- **Keep all of your important records and documents in a safe deposit box or another safe place away from the premises.**

DURING A FLOOD

- **People lose their lives by attempting to drive over a flooded roadway.** The speed and depth of the water is not always obvious. There may be a hidden portion of the roadway washed out under the water. Two feet of water will carry away most automobiles.
- **Monitor the radio or television** for the latest weather information.
- **Move valuable household possessions to the upper floor** or move to another location if flooding is imminent and time permits.
- **If instructed to do so by local authorities, turn off utilities at their source.**
- **Listen to a battery-operated radio for evacuation instructions.**
- **If advised to evacuate, do so quickly.**
- Evacuation is much simpler and safer before flood waters become too deep for ordinary vehicles to drive through.
- **Follow recommended evacuation routes.** Short cuts may be blocked.

AFTER A FLOOD

- **Do not let children play in or near flood waters, flooded creeks or flood retention ponds.**
- **Stay alert in areas where flood waters have receded.** Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a vehicle. **NEVER cross a flooded road or bridge in your vehicle!**

- Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. **Listen to a radio or television and don't return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.**
- When you are allowed to return, remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance.
- **Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage.** When entering buildings, use extreme caution. If your home was damaged, check the utilities.
- **Look for fire hazards.**
- **Stay out of buildings that remain in the flood waters.**
- **Avoid coming in contact with flood waters.** The water may be contaminated with oil, gasoline or raw sewage. Do not wade through a flooded stream to protect or retrieve belongings.
- **Consider your family's health and safety.** Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with flood waters. Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Throw away food -- including canned goods -- that has come in contact with flood waters.
- **Pump out flooded basements gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.**
- **Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems** as soon as possible. Damaged sewer systems pose a health hazard.
- If unaffected by the flood, stay out of the area until you are permitted by local officials. Your presence may hamper emergency operations.
- **Monitor the radio for special information about where to go to get assistance for housing, clothing and food.** Other programs are available to help you cope with the stress of the situation.
- **Take photos or video of the damage to your home and your belongings.**