

# Flooding Safety Tips

**Flood Watch:** Flooding or flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or commercial television for additional information.

**Flood Warning:** Flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

**Flash Flood Warning:** A flash flood is occurring or is imminent. Move to higher ground immediately. Flash floods develop MUCH quicker than river floods.

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

## Before a Flood:

- Learn flood warning signs and, if used in your area, any community alert signals.
- Know how to shut off electricity, gas and water at a main switches and valves. Know where gas pilots are located and how 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 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.
- Insure your property and possessions. Make an inventory of your possessions using a paper list, 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.
- Maintain a disaster supply kit.

## During a Flood:

- 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 the 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. Shortcuts may be blocked.
- 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.

### **After a Flood:**

- Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Listen to a radio or television, and do not return home until the 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.
- Look for fire hazards.
- If your home was damaged, check the utilities.
- Stay out of buildings that remain in the floodwaters.
- Avoid coming in contact with floodwaters. 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 hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with floodwaters. Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Throw away food – including canned goods – that have come in contact with floodwaters.
- 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.
- Stay alert for areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a vehicle.
- Do not let children play in or near floodwaters, flooded creeks or flood retention ponds.
- Stay away from downed power lines. Report them to the utility company immediately.
- If unaffected by the flood, stay out of the area until allowed entering by officials. Your presence may hamper emergency operations.
- Monitoring 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 and/or videotape the damage to your home and your belongings.