

FLOODS

SPEED
LIMIT
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BEFORE



If you live near a body of water, at some point your community may be threatened by a flood.

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters, causing almost 90 percent of damage related to natural disasters.

Since 1990, floods have caused more than 900 deaths and cost, on average, more than \$4 billion per year.

Flash flooding can occur anywhere—at any time of year—and it usually happens within six hours of a severe rainstorm. Flash flood-producing rains can trigger catastrophic mudslides.

Unlike flash floods, river or coastal flooding is a long-term event that may occur after some warning and last for a week or more.

Although timely warnings have greatly diminished flood fatalities in the United States, property damage continues to mount from such events since there is little that can be done to stop a flood once it has started.

What to do before a flood strikes

- Assemble a disaster supplies kit that contains: a first aid kit, canned food and can opener, at least three gallons of water per person, protective clothing and rainwear, bedding and/or sleeping bags, a battery-powered radio and flashlights (including extra batteries), and any essential items for children, pets, or elderly and/or disabled family members.
- Regularly check battery-operated radios, televisions and flashlights to make sure they work.
- Keep insurance policies, legal documents and other valuables in a safe deposit box or waterproof container.
- Develop an evacuation plan with your family.
- Make sure one or more of the family's cars is always reliable in case you need to get out of town quickly.
- Talk to your insurance agent. Consider purchasing or renewing flood, home and automobile insurance policies.
- Have back-flow valves installed in your plumbing's sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Make a list of items to bring inside in case a flood threatens (patio furniture, lawn decorations, tools, trash cans, planters, etc.).
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts so water is able to drain properly.
- If you live near the water, consider elevating your home to make it more resistant to flood-driven waters (check with your town's planning and zoning official for approval).
- Raise your furnace, water heater, and electric panel if they are in areas of your home that may be flooded.
- Seal walls and openings in basements with water-proofing compounds to avoid seepage through cracks.
- Take photographs of your home for insurance purposes.
- If you have a boat, determine where you can store it in the event of a flood.
- Plan for pet safety by contacting local animal shelters for emergency housing information for pets.
- Keep emergency cash in the house.
- Write down instructions for how to turn off electricity, gas, and water if authorities advise you to do so (remember, you'll need a professional to turn them back on afterward).
- Identify several places to go if you are told to evacuate your house, such as a friend's home in another town, a motel, or an emergency shelter.

DURING

You've done everything in your power to prepare for a flood. You've secured a flood insurance policy, and made your home flood-ready.

Now, the floodwaters are rising, and there's nothing you can do to stop them. But there are things you can do to make sure your family stays safe until the water levels drop again.

The best way to prevent harm during a flood is to be prepared with information and supplies. Remember that flood conditions change rapidly and severe flooding can develop in minutes.

Flood water levels can be much deeper than they appear. The depth of water may be difficult to assess. Only two feet of water can cause a car to be swept away, and as little as six inches can cause unstable footing.

Never try to drive through floodwater. Water can be deeper than it appears, and water levels can rise very quickly. If a car stalls in floodwater, get out quickly and move to higher ground.

Do not walk or drive through flood waters. More people drown in their cars during a flood than anywhere else.

If possible, take the following actions when a flood is imminent

- Fill bathtubs, sinks, and jugs with clean water in case water becomes contaminated.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest storm information.
- If local authorities instruct you to do so, turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve.
- If told to evacuate your home, do so immediately.
- If waters start to rise inside your house before you have evacuated, retreat to the second floor, the attic, or if necessary, the roof.
- Floodwaters may carry raw sewage, chemical waste, and other disease-spreading substances; if you've come in contact with floodwaters, wash your hands with soap and disinfected water.
- Avoid walking through floodwaters, as just six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet.
- Don't drive through a flooded area; if you come upon a flooded road, turn around and go another way—car can be carried away by just two feet of flood water.

- Electric current passes easily through water, so stay away from downed power lines and electrical wires.
- Look out for animals—especially snakes—as they lose their homes in floods, too.

If Your Home is Flooded

- Turn off utilities and don't turn them back on until notified that it is safe to do so.
- Avoid weakened structures, particularly floors, walls, and rooftops to avoid structural damage.
- Do not pump out your basement until flood water recedes.

Drinking Water

- If your well has been flooded, assume the water in your home has been contaminated.
- If you get water from public source, your local health jurisdiction will let you know whether your water is safe to drink.
- Bottled water is the best choice and, if you can, get commercially bottled water that has been stored for less than six months in tightly sealed containers; plan for one gallon per person per day.



AFTER

A flood can leave a trail of structural destruction, but what about the emotional impact?

The full force of the disaster is often realized after the floodwaters recede and emergency crews go home. In addition to the clean-up efforts, it's important that you devote time to restoring your own emotional wellness.

Feelings of grief, despair and frustration are normal reactions to such events.

Some emotions you may experience include

- Panic, or feeling out of control
- Despair
- Disorientation/confusion
- Guilt
- Shock/numbness
- Anger
- Anxiety/uncertainty
- Grief



These coping techniques can help you deal with the range of emotions you are likely experiencing

- Be extra patient and don't expect things to restore instantly; accept that restoration (physical and emotional) takes time.
- Realize that you will experience a range of emotions, and moods can change unexpectedly.
- Don't overlook the feelings of children as you deal with the situation; they need to feel that they can count on you for extra attention, love, and support.
- Try to keep your family diet as nourishing as possible for needed energy.
- Focusing on the big picture, instead of the little details and little problems will give you a sense of competency.
- Talk with friends, family, counselors, or members of the clergy; in crisis situations, a supportive network is essential.
- Try to get at least seven to eight hours of sleep a night to refresh your mind and body for the next day's activities.
- Make a list of things that need to be done and rank them in order of priority.
- Learn acceptance and try not to worry about things you cannot control—instead, conserve your energies for things you can control.

RESOURCES

Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by state and local government.

In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.

Additional resources are available

Find more information online at **FOH4You.com**, or call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for help and support.

Consultants are available any time, day or night to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

Helpful websites and organizations

- American Red Cross
RedCross.org
1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (which oversees the U.S. Fire Administration)
FEMA.gov
1-800-621-FEMA (1-800-621-3362)
(TTY: 1-800-462-7585)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administrations' (NOAA) National Weather Service
Weather.gov
1-828-271-4800, then press 2
(TTY: 1-828-271-4010)
ncdc.orders@noaa.gov
- National Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (NVOAD)
NVOAD.org
1-703-778-5088

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HOURS A DAY

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-222-0364
(TTY: 1-888-262-7848)
FOH4You.com

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