How to Prepare for and Safely Weather a Flood

Categories : Disaster Related

The following information is provided by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and American Red Cross:

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Flooding can develop slowly during an extended period of rain or in a warming trend following a heavy snow. Flash flooding can occur quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain.

Be prepared for flooding no matter where you live, but particularly if you are in a low-lying area, near water or downstream from a dam. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, or low-lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood.

Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit which includes:

- At least a three-day supply of water and non-perishable food
- Flashlight, battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible), and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Copies of personal documents (medication list, pertinent medical information, proof of residence, birth certificates, insurance policies, social security cards, driver's license, wills, tax records, etc.)
- Family and emergency contact information
- Cell phone and chargers
- Extra cash, set of car keys and house keys, clothing, hat and sturdy shoes
- Baby supplies
- Pet supplies
- Bedding including sleeping bags and pillows

These terms help identify a flood hazard:

Flood Watch: Flooding is possible. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information

Flash Flood Watch: Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground; listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for 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; seek higher ground on foot immediately

Before a Flood:

- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel if you live in an area that has a high flood risk
- Install "check values" in sewer traps to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home
- If you can, construct barriers to stop floodwater from entering the building and seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage

During a Flood:

- Listen to the radio or television for information
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. If there is a possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- If you must prepare to evacuate you should: Secure your home, bring in outdoor furniture, move essential items to an upper floor, turn off utilities at the main switches or values if instructed to do so, and disconnect electric appliances.
- Do not touch electric equipment if you are wet or standing in water

If you have to leave your home:
Stay away from floodwaters. If you come upon a flowing stream where water is above your ankles, stop, turn around and go another way. Six inches of swiftly moving water can sweep you off of your feet. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

If you are driving:
If you come upon a flooded road while driving, turn around and go another way. If you are caught on a flooded road and waters are rising rapidly around you, get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. Most cars can be swept away by less then two feet of moving water.

After a Flood:

- Return home only when authorities have declared the area safe
- Before entering your home, look inside for loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damage
- Use caution when entering your home, parts of your home may be collapsed or damaged
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
- If power lines are down outside your home, do not step in puddles or standing water; Report downed power lines to your local police or fire department
- If you smell natural or propane gas or hear a hissing noise, leave immediately and call the fire department
- Keep children and pets away from hazardous sites and floodwater
- Make sure your food and water are safe. Do not use water that could be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula. Contact your local or state health department for specific recommendations for boiling or treating water in your area.

For information about floods, risk of financial loss due to flooding and flood insurance go to:
https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program

During times of disasters, scammers are busy trying to sell offers that may sound legitimate but may be an illegal scheme or fraud. If you feel it may be a scam or have questions about a business, visit this “Better Business Bureau” webpage, where you can investigate scams or report one, https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker/us

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SOURCES: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and American Red Cross
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