

FEMA Guidelines for Preparing for a Flood

Being prepared and monitoring flood conditions allow individuals more time to react to quickly rising water. Sometimes people perceive a river or stream to be at a safe distance or think rain events are occurring too far away to impact them, however, as evident by this year's flooding, events happening many miles away can have a significant impact on local waterways and flood levels. High water levels and the longevity of the flood could continue to cause federal and non-federal levees to fail or be overtopped and additional heavy rainfall could cause rivers to rise. The message is clear, stay alert about how the levees or dams near you are holding up as flooding continues and make flood preparations today to help ensure safety and security tomorrow.

Ask yourself: Is your home prepared? Do you have the supplies you need to take care of yourself and family for at least three days?

Protect your home

A few inches of water in your home can cost tens of thousands of dollars to repair.

- In situations where only a few inches of water, or minor seepage is expected to affect your home, elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel.
- Consider installing "check valves" to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Anchor any fuel tanks. An unanchored tank in your home can be torn free by floodwaters and the broken supply line can contaminate your home. An unanchored tank outside can be swept downstream and damage other houses.
- Make sure your sump pump is working and then install a battery-operated backup, in case of a power failure. Installing a water alarm will also let you know if water is accumulating in your basement.
- If feasible, construct barriers to stop floodwater from entering the building and seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds.
- On a case-by-case basis, flood insurance may reimburse for up to \$1000 in costs accrued while taking precautions to protect a property from imminent danger of flood damage. For instance, purchasing or making sandbags, or moving a "movable home" out of harm's way, may be reimbursable. For more information, consult your flood insurance agent.
- If you must prepare to evacuate, move essential items to the highest floor. More tips <http://m.fema.gov>.

Individual and family preparedness

- **Make a kit.** Keep emergency supplies on hand, such as non-perishable food, water, medicine, maps, a flashlight (with batteries stored separately), NOAA weather radio with extra batteries stored separately, dust mask and a first-aid kit. Get more information when making an emergency kit at <http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html>.
- Store important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.

Create a Plan

Create a plan for what you would do during an emergency and discuss it with your family because you may not be together when the floodwaters rise.

- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be the "family contact" in case your family is separated during a flood. Make sure everyone in your family knows the name, address, and phone number of this contact person.
- Get more information about how to create an emergency plan at <http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>.

Stay informed: Monitor emergency alerts

The water is moving into some areas that don't normally flood, or may not even be expected to during this event, so it's important to stay informed and monitor the situation carefully. This can be done using a NOAA weather radio that gives round-the-clock local emergency alerts and information. Local radio or television stations also provide important emergency information. If flooding begins or seems likely, residents should follow the instructions of state and local officials.

Driving and Evacuating

It's important to consider that during a flood you may need to evacuate to an emergency shelter or other form of temporary housing. If asked to evacuate, do you know where to go and what to bring with you?

- Create an evacuation plan before flooding occurs.
- Evacuate immediately, if advised to do so.
- **Do not drive or walk through floodwater.** Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths which occur after individuals drive or walk through floodwater. Turn around and find an alternate route if a road is flooded; it is almost always more dangerous than it appears.
- Driving through six inches of standing water can cause cars to lose control & stall. Avoid flooded roads.
- **Don't return home until disaster officials advise you that it is safe to do so.**
- Entry roads may be damaged and entering a structure that has been damaged can also be extremely dangerous.
- After a flood, stay away from downed power lines and report them to the power company.
- Be aware of areas where waters have receded. Roads may have weakened & could collapse under the weight of a car.

Access and functional needs

Residents in potential flood areas who have access and functional needs should contact local officials to request assistance and information. Residents in impacted areas are urged to look out for their neighbors with these needs and to help them get in touch with local officials.

As you prepare, consider all the strategies, services, devices, tools and techniques you use to live with a disability on a daily basis. Keep in mind that you may need medications, durable medical equipment, consumable medical supplies, your service animal, assistive technology, communications tools, disability service providers, accessible housing, transportation, and health-related items. For more information, visit

<http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/disabled.html>.

Other information and resources

When flooding occurs, the first responders are local emergency and public works personnel, volunteers, humanitarian organizations, and numerous private interest groups. This collection of agencies helps provide emergency assistance required to protect the public's health and safety to meet immediate needs.

Find the closest shelter

To locate a shelter, call 2-1-1 in most areas, or in Iowa visit

http://www.uweci.org/content/united_way_2_1_1.aspx.

Plan to stay in business

Businesses should also have a disaster plan and prepare to survive the flooding. Learn more at <http://www.ready.gov/business/index.html>, or from the U.S. Small Business Administration at www.sba.gov.

Sign up for FEMA RSS Feeds

Get the latest information about major disaster declarations, find a local shelter or Disaster Recovery Center and more, sign-up at <http://www.fema.gov/help/rss.shtm>.

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