

Floods

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters. Most communities in the United States can experience some kind of flooding after spring rains, heavy thunderstorms or winter snow thaws. Floods can be very slow or fast rising, but generally develop over a period of days.

Dam failures are potentially the most catastrophic of flood events. A dam failure is usually the result of structural damage caused by a major event such as an earthquake. When a dam fails, a large amount of water is suddenly let loose downstream, destroying anything in its path.

Flash Floods

Flash floods are usually the result of intense storms dropping large amounts of rain within a brief period of time. Flash floods occur with little or no warning and can reach full peak in only a few minutes.

Before the Flood

- * Find out if you live in a flood prone area. Contact the Department of Planning and Zoning for this information.
- * If you live in a flood area, you should stockpile emergency building materials such as plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber, nails and sandbags.
- * Contact your insurance agent to discuss flood insurance coverage. Flood losses are not covered under homeowner's insurance policies.
- * Have recommended emergency supplies on hand.
- * Make sure all family members know how to respond during and after a flood or flash flood.

During a Flood Warning

- * Listen to the radio and television for further information and instructions from emergency management officials.
- * If you are where it might flood, prepare to evacuate and to seek shelter.
- * Fill bathtubs, sinks and jugs with water in case water becomes contaminated.
- * Bring outdoor belongings, such as patio furniture, indoors.

- * Make sure you have enough fuel in your car. During emergencies, filling stations may not be operating.
- * Move valuable household possessions to the upper floors or to safe ground, if time permits.
- * Only if you are told to do so by authorities, turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve.
- * Join with neighbors and volunteers to place sandbags or other protection in place. Stack sandbags away from the outside walls of the house.

If Told to Evacuate

- * Secure your home, get your pre-assembled emergency supplies and do so immediately.
- * Continue to listen to the radio for evacuation instructions.
- * Follow recommended evacuation routes, shortcuts may be blocked.
- * Leave early enough to avoid being marooned by flood waters. Do not drive over a flooded road. If your car stalls, abandon it and climb to higher ground.

If Caught at Home

- * Turn on battery-powered radio to get the latest emergency information.
- * Get your pre-assembled emergency supplies and move to the second floor or roof.
- * Wait for help. Do not attempt to drive on flooded roads.

If Caught Outdoors

- * Climb to higher ground and stay there.
- * Do not attempt to walk through even slow-moving floodwaters. If it is moving swiftly, water one foot deep can sweep you off your feet.

After a Flood

- * Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Do not return home until the authorities have said it is safe to do so.
- * Do not use water or eat food that has been exposed to flood waters. Wells should be pumped

out and tested before drinking. Emergency management officials will let you know when it is safe to use public water.

- * Do not enter your home if floodwaters have not receded around the building.
- * When entering buildings, use extreme caution. Use only battery-powered lanterns or flashlights to examine buildings.
- * Look for hazards such as broken or leaking gas lines, flooded electrical circuits or submerged furnaces or electrical appliances.
- * Open windows and leave if you smell gas. Contact professionals to service and correct gas or electrical problems.
- * If your basement has flooded, pump it out gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.
- * Listen to your radio for instructions on assistance and medical care. If you have flood insurance and suffer a loss, notify your agent.