

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A FLOOD



## Personal Risk Services

Flood-related injuries and deaths are often the result of individuals trapped in floodwaters. The best way to stay safe is to leave areas that flood and avoid floodwaters.

### **PERSONAL PROTECTION: EVACUATE**

To avoid being trapped when floodwaters threaten your area, the best action to protect yourself and your family is to evacuate before flooding starts. Know and follow the directions from local officials for community evacuation or seek high ground for localized flooding. If you do not evacuate before the flooding occurs or you are trapped by flash flooding, do not enter flooded areas or moving water either on foot or in a vehicle, including areas that appear to have only inches of water.

### **PROPERTY PROTECTION: ELEVATE, WATERPROOF, AND CLEAR DEBRIS**

- Your goal now, before a flood occurs, is to reduce the risk of damage to structures from flooding. This means elevating critical utilities, such as electrical panels, switches, sockets, wiring, appliances, and heating systems, and waterproofing basements. In areas with repetitive flooding, consider elevating the entire structure.
- Make sure that basements are waterproofed and that 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.
- Clear debris from gutters and downspouts. Anchor any fuel tanks. Move furniture, valuables, and important documents to a safe place.

### **NOTIFICATIONS:**

Receiving timely information about weather conditions or other emergency events can make all the difference in knowing when to take action to be safe.

- Monitor the weather reports provided by your local news media.
- Many communities have text or email alerting systems for emergency notifications.

To find out what alerts are available in your area, do an Internet search with your town, city, or county name and the word “alerts.”

- Think about how you will stay informed if there is a power outage. Have extra batteries for a battery-operated radio and your cell phone. Consider having a hand crank radio or cell phone charger.
- You can use USGS’s WaterAlert system ([http://maps.waterdata.usgs.gov/mapper/water alert](http://maps.waterdata.usgs.gov/mapper/water%20alert)) to receive texts or email messages when a stream in your area is rising to flood level.
- Know your evacuation routes; plan your transportation and a place to stay. The safest way to survive a flood is to evacuate the area if advised to leave. To ensure that you will be able to act quickly should the need arise, you need to plan ahead.
- Know your community’s local flood evacuation plan and identify several escape routes for your location if roads are blocked; include plans to evacuate people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, pets, service animals, and livestock.
- If you will evacuate by car, keep your car fueled and in good condition. Keep emergency supplies and a change of clothes in your car.
- If you will need to share transportation, make arrangements now. If you will need to use public transportation, including paratransit, contact your local government emergency management agency to ask how an evacuation will work, how you will get current information during an evacuation, the location of staging areas, and other information.

- If you need to relocate for an extended period of time, identify a place away from home now where you could go if you had to leave. Consider family or friends who live outside of the local area.
- If you expect to go to a shelter after evacuating, download the American Red Cross Shelter Finder app. This app displays open American Red Cross shelters and provides the capacity and current population of each shelter. Visit [www.redcross.org/mobile-apps/shelter-finder-app](http://www.redcross.org/mobile-apps/shelter-finder-app). You can also text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area.
- If you have pets and plan to go to a shelter, call to inquire whether the shelter can accommodate your pets. Shelters will accept service animals.

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## PROTECT YOURSELF DURING A FLOOD

Flood-related injuries and deaths are often the result of individuals being trapped in floodwaters. Authorities may direct you to evacuate a low-lying area, or the likely path of the rising waters, to avoid being trapped by rapid changes in water levels.

### EVACUATE

If authorities advise or order you to evacuate, do so immediately. Be sure to remember the Five Ps of Evacuation: **People, Prescriptions, Paper, Personal Needs and Priceless Items**. If you are in the path of a slow-onset flood and there is time before you need to evacuate, consider the following strategies.

- ✓ Move items you want to protect to a higher floor.
- ✓ Turn off gas, water, and electricity if you know how and can do it safely. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or you are standing in water.
- ✓ Put sandbags around your property.

If you see floodwater on roads, walkways, bridges, and on the ground, do not attempt to cross. The depth of the water is not always obvious and the roadbed may be washed out under the water. Moving water has tremendous power. Six inches of moving water has the potential to knock you off your feet, and a foot of water can sweep a vehicle—even a large SUV—off of the road. Floodwaters can contain rocks, mud, other debris, oil, gasoline, and even sewage. Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.

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## PROTECT YOURSELF AFTER A FLOOD:

### IF YOU STAYED IN THE AREA OR AS YOU RETURN

Listen to official public information to get expert, informed advice as soon as it becomes available. After the rising water has stopped, use the following considerations and precautions:

- If your home was severely flooded, you may only be able to enter when officials say it is safe to do so. Stay out of any building surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering flooded buildings. There may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations. Personal safety considerations include protecting yourself from electric shock, mold contamination, asbestos, and lead paint. Turn off electricity at main breaker or fuse box.
- Homeowners who are unfamiliar with electricity or their home's electrical systems should contact their local power company or a qualified electrician to assist them in making their property safe from electrical hazards after a flood. Check for loose boards and slippery floors.
- Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or you are standing in water.
- Shut off utilities to a flooded home or building.
- Use flashlights, not lanterns, torches, or matches, to examine buildings. Flammable gases may be inside the structure and open flames may cause a fire or explosion.
- If you turned off your gas, a licensed professional is required to turn it back on.

**SOURCE: FEMA**