

## Floods and Heavy Rains Emergency Preparations

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the North America. Not all floods are alike. Some floods develop slowly, while others such a flash floods, can develop in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain. Additionally, floods can be localized, impacting only a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting coastal areas, watersheds and multiple municipalities.

Flash floods can occur within a few minutes or hours of excessive rainfall, a dam or levee failure, or a sudden release of water held by an ice jam. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water carrying rocks, mud and other debris. Overland flooding, the most common type of flooding event typically occurs when waterways such as rivers or streams overflow their banks as a result of rainwater or a possible levee breach and cause flooding in surrounding areas. It can also occur when rainfall or snow melt exceeds the capacity of underground pipes, or the capacity of streets and drains designed to carry flood water away from urban areas.

Be aware of heavy rain and flood hazards no matter where you live or work, but especially if you are in low-lying areas, near the ocean, etc. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds or low-lying ground that appear harmless in dry weather can flood.

To prepare for flood conditions, you should:

- Build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.
- Avoid building in a flood plain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel in your home if you live in an area that has any flood risk.
- Install backwater prevention "check valves" on your sewer laterals and perimeter drainage system to prevent sewer stormwater from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Install a sump pump in your basement and ensure any flood waters can be discharged away from your property.
- Construct barriers to stop flood waters from entering the building and seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds.
- Contact your insurance company to determine what flood and sewer back-up coverage you have and what coverage you need to put in place to provide adequate content, repair, etc. protection. Municipalities are not responsible for flood, storm, etc. water damages sustained by property owners.
- Listen to weather alerts to get current information.
- Avoid moving water during a flood. Stay off the roads. Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way. If you are driving and your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.
- Stay away from damaged areas unless your assistance has been specifically requested by police, fire, or relief organization.

- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded. Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
- Standing water may be electrically charged inside your home from electrical services. If safe to do so, turn off the electricity at the main breaker or fuse box, even if the power is on in your community. That way, you can decide when your home is dry enough to turn it back on.
- Exterior areas may also be electrically charged due to underground or downed power lines. Contact the Electric Utility if you have any questions or concerns.
- Clean and disinfect everything inside your building that got wet. Mud left from floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.
- Check for propane leaks.
- If you hire clean-up or repair contractors verify qualifications.

For more information download [Water Damage is on the Rise: Are you Protected? \(300kb\)](#)