

Before a Flood

What is your flood risk? Your community officials are your best resources to learn about the history of flooding for your region. Ask whether your property is in the floodplain and if it is above or below the flood stage water level. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are used to determine your flood risk – contact your local planning department to learn more.

To prepare for a flood, you should:

- Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater, and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.

If you live in a frequently flooded area, take preventative measures and stockpile emergency building materials:

- Plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber, nails, hammer and saw, pry bar, shovels, and sandbags.
- Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains.
- As a last resort, use large corks or stoppers to plug showers, tubs, or basins.

Plan and practice an evacuation route

- Learn flood-warning signs and your community's alert signals
- Develop an emergency communication plan.
- In case family members are separated from one another during floods or flashfloods, have a plan for getting back together.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

Make sure that all family members know how to respond after a flood or flash flood

- Teach all family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water.
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police, fire department, and which radio station to tune to for emergency information.
- Be prepared to evacuate.

If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If time permits, here are other steps you can take before the floodwaters come:

- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water
- Move valuables, such as papers, furs, jewelry, and clothing to upper floors or higher elevations.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with clean water. Sanitize the sinks and tubs first by using bleach. Rinse, then fill with clean water.
- Bring outdoor possessions, such as lawn furniture, grills and trash cans inside, or tie them down securely.