

# Flash Flood

## PREPAREDNESS



Flash floods 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 can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings and bridges. Flash floods can also trigger catastrophic mudslides.

Flash floods are the #1 weather related killer in the United States.

### National Weather Service . . .

Staying current with forecasts from the National Weather Service can be an important part of flood preparedness. Individuals can purchase a NOAA weather radio to directly hear the forecasts, advisories, watches and/or warnings. Some NOAA weather radios can alarm when there is a serious/dangerous weather condition. These radios are available at many stores.

The following terms may be used by the National Weather service:

A **Flash Flood or Flood Watch** means that flash flooding or flooding is possible within the designated watch area.

A **Flash Flood or Flood Warning** means that flash flooding or flooding has been reported or is imminent - take necessary steps at once.

An **Urban and Small Stream Advisory** means that flooding of small streams, streets and low-lying areas (such as railroad underpasses and urban storm drains) is occurring.

A **Flash Flood or Flood Statement** is follow-up information regarding a flash flood/flood event.

### Before a flood occurs. . .

✓ Find out if you live in a flood prone area. You can check with your local building department to see the flood maps for your municipality.

☞ If you are in a flood zone - purchase sufficient flood insurance. Flood losses are not covered under normal homeowner's insurance.

✓ Learn how your community would alert you if a flood was occurring or predicted.

✓ Pre-assemble flood-fighting supplies like plastic sheeting, lumber, sandbags.

✓ Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains.

✓ As a last resort have large corks or stoppers to plug showers, tubs or basins from water rising up through the pipes.

✓ Maintain a disaster supply kit at home. A kit will have (at minimum):

- First aid supplies
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Non-perishable food
- Drinking water
- Blanket(s) or sleeping bag(s)
- Rain gear or a change of clothing

### During the flood . . .

- ☞ Monitor commercial radio, television, NOAA Weather radio or your Emergency Alerting Station for information
- ☞ Be prepared to evacuate to higher ground if ordered to do so by authorities
- ☞ Adhere to any emergency orders of authorities
- ☞ Bring possessions inside the house or secure them
- ☞ Do not touch any electrical appliances that are wet or standing in water
- ☞ Avoid walking or driving through flood waters

Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Listen to a radio or television and do not return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.

Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance - infants, elderly people and people with disabilities.

### After the flood . . .

- If food or medicine has come in contact with flood waters, throw it out.
- Stay out of buildings if flood waters remain around the building

### After the flood . . .

- When entering buildings after a flood use extreme caution
  - Wear sturdy shoes and use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings
  - Examine walls, floors, doors and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapse
  - Watch out for animals, like snakes, that may have come into your home with flood waters
  - Take pictures of the damage - both of the house and its contents for insurance claims.
- Look for fire hazards
  - Broken or leaking gas lines
  - Flooded electrical circuits
  - Submerged furnaces or electrical appliances
  - Flammable or explosive materials coming from upstream
  - **Report potential emergencies to authorities.**
- It's best to have a professional pump out a basement - to avoid further structural damage. FEMA recommends pumping out about one-third of the water per day.

Bergen County Office of Emergency Management  
201-634-3100 or [www.bcoem.org](http://www.bcoem.org)

