

Are You Ready?

**FLOOD
PREPARATION**

WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

SPRING 2008

Are You Ready?

Is a series of handouts designed to assist you and your family to plan ahead for emergencies.



For information
on
Flood
Preparedness



Washington County Fire
& Emergency Services/
Emergency Management
33 W. Washington St.
Hagerstown, MD 21740
240-313-2930



www.fema.gov



<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>



American
Red Cross

www.redcross.org



www.weather.gov



Washington County
Health Department
1302 Pennsylvania Ave.
Hagerstown, MD 21742
240-313-3200
<http://washhealth.org/>

FACTS ABOUT FLOODING

Flooding poses tremendous danger to both people and property. Since 1900, floods have taken more than 10,000 lives in the United States alone.

Most people are unaware that:

- 66 percent of flood deaths occur in vehicles, and most happen when drivers make a single, fatal mistake trying to navigate through flood waters.
- Just 6 inches of rapidly moving water can knock a person down.
- A mere 2 feet of water can float a large vehicle, even a bus.
- One-third of flooded roads and bridges are so damaged by water that any vehicle trying to cross stands only a 50% chance of making it to the other side.

Beyond the risk of fatalities, floods devastate homes, towns and even entire regions. The great Mississippi River Flood of 1993 covered an area 500 miles long and 200 miles wide. More than 50,000 homes were damaged and 12,000 miles of farmland were washed out.

FLOOD: Are You At Risk?

The best way to prepare for a possible flood is to first determine if you live or work in a flood plain. You can do this by contacting the local county geologist or county planning department to find out if your home is located in a flash-flood prone area or landslide-prone area.

Anticipating a potential flood is possible by using the following key factors that contribute to flooding and flash-flooding.

FLOODING INDICATORS:

- U Unusually hard rain over several hours or steady substantial rain over several days
- U Rains in conjunction with a spring thaw
- U A hurricane or other tropical system is affecting your area

FLASH-FLOODING:

- U Water rising rapidly in streams and rivers

Any of the above signs should prompt you to get an up-to-the-minute report on flood conditions. Consult The Weather Channel or NOAA Weather Radio for accurate and timely storm updates.



The four key alerts specifically related to flood conditions are:

FLOOD WATCH- High flow or overflow of water from a river is possible in the given time period. It can also apply to heavy runoff or drainage of water into low-lying areas. These watches are generally issued for flooding that is expected to occur at least 6 hours after heavy rains have ended.

FLOOD WARNING- Flooding conditions are actually occurring or are imminent in the warning area.

FLASH FLOOD WATCH- Flash flooding is possible in or close to the watch area. Flash Flood Watches are generally issued for flooding that is expected to occur within 6 hours after heavy rains have ended.

FLASH FLOOD WARNING- Flash flooding is actually occurring or are imminent in the warning area. It can be issued as a result of torrential rains, a dam failure, or ice jam.

****F.Y.I****

Determine your flood insurance eligibility now. Damage caused by floods and high wind peril are often not covered in regular homeowners insurance. Find out more by contacting:

- * Your insurance agent
- * National Insurance Consumer Helpline at (1-800-942-4242)
- * The Insurance Information Institute at (1-800-331-9146)

PREPARING FOR A FLOOD:

Once you've determined whether or not you are at risk for a possible flood you should take the following basic steps in preparing for the storm:

- S** Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- S** Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family.
- S** Post emergency phone numbers at every phone.
- S** Inform local authorities about any special needs, i.e. elderly, disabled or bedridden people.
- S** Identify potential home hazards and know how to secure or protect them before the storm strikes. Turn off electrical power when there is standing water, fallen power lines or before you evacuate. Turn off gas and water supplies and secure structurally unstable building materials.
- S** Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where it is and how to use it.
- S** Buy and install sump pumps with back-up power.
- S** Have a licensed electrician raise electric components (switches, sockets, circuit breakers and wiring) at least 12" above your homes projected flood elevation.
- S** For drains, toilets, and other sewer connections, install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters from entering.
- S** Anchor fuel tanks which can contaminate your basement if torn free. An unanchored tank outside can be swept downstream and damage other houses.



EMERGENCY SUPPLIES:

At a minimum, you should stock your home with the following supplies:

- p** Several clean containers of water, large enough for a 3-5 day supply of water (about 5 gallons for each person)
- p** 3-5 day supply of non-perishable food and a non-electric can opener
- p** A first aid kit and manual, prescription medicines and special medical needs
- p** A battery-powered radio, flashlights and extra batteries
- p** Sleeping bags or extra blankets
- p** Water-purifying supplies, such as chlorine or iodine tablets or unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach
- p** Baby food/prepared formula, diapers
- p** Disposable cleaning cloths, such as "baby wipes" for the whole family
- p** Personal hygiene supplies
- p** Emergency kit for your car
- p** Rubber boots, sturdy shoes & waterproof gloves

If You Are Ordered To Evacuate:

You should never ignore an evacuation order. If a flood warning is issued for your area or you are directed by authorities to evacuate the area:

- Take only essential items with you
- If you have time, turn off gas, electricity and water
- Disconnect appliances to prevent electrical shock when power is restored
- Follow designated evacuation routes and expect heavy traffic
- Do not attempt to drive or walk across creeks or flooded roads

If You Are Not Ordered To Evacuate:

To get through the storm in the safest possible manner:

- Monitor the radio or television for weather updates
- Prepare to evacuate to a shelter or to a neighbor's home if your home is damaged, or if you are instructed to do so by emergency personnel.

RETURNING HOME AFTER A FLOOD

Use caution when returning to your home after a flood as water may contain sewage. Try to return during the daytime so that you do not have to use any lights. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, leave the house immediately and notify the gas company or police or fire departments. Do not turn on the lights or do anything that may cause a spark. Do not return to the house until you are told that it is safe to do so.

Avoid any downed power lines, particularly those in water. Avoid wading in standing water, which also may contain glass or metal fragments.

CLEANUP

- H** Keep children and pets out of affected area until cleanup has been completed
- H** Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves and goggles during cleanup of affected area
- H** Walls, hard-surfaced floors and many other household surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that come into contact with food, such as counter tops, pantry shelves, refrigerators, etc.
- H** Wash all linens and clothing in hot water and detergent or dry clean them. It is recommended that this be done at a Laundromat until your onsite wastewater system has been professionally inspected and serviced
- H** Wash clothes worn during cleanup in hot water and detergent. Wash these clothes separately from uncontaminated clothing and linens
- H** Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected (such as mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings and most paper products)
- H** Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters
- H** Help the drying process by using fans, air conditioning units and dehumidifiers
- H** Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill

