



# Thoughts on Flood Safety

Flooding is a temporary overflowing of water onto normally dry land. Flooding may happen with only a few inches of water, or it may cover a house to the rooftop. There are many possible food causes including heavy rain or snowmelt, coastal storms and storm surge, waterway overflow from being blocked with debris or ice, or overflow of levees, dams, or sewer water systems, Flooding can occur slowly over many days or happen very quickly with little or no warning.

Flooding can happen in any U.S. state or territory. It is particularly important to be prepared for flooding if you live in a low-lying area near a body of water, such as near a river, stream, or culvert; along a coast; or downstream from a dam or levee.

Flooding can occur any season. However, some areas of the country are at greater risk during certain times of the year.

Coastal areas are at greater flooding risk during hurricane season (i.e., June to November), while the Midwest is more at risk in the spring and during heavy summer rains. Ice jams occur in the spring in the Northeast and Northwest. Even the Southwest's deserts flood during the late summer monsoon season.

## CREATE YOUR FLOOD EMERGENCY PLAN BEFORE IT IS FLOODING

- + Familiarize yourself with local emergency plans. Know where to go to get to higher ground, the highest level of a building, or to evacuate the area.
- + Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit, including a minimum of 3 days of food and water, flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies.
- + If your area has a history of flooding, consider buying flood insurance.
- + Photograph your property exterior and interior for insurance purposes.

## BASIC SAFETY TIPS

- + Avoid walking or driving through flood waters.
- + Do not drive over bridges under fast-moving floodwaters. Floodwaters can erode foundation material from around footings and make the bridge unstable.
- + Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down. One foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away. The best action is not to drive or go into the water.
- + If there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground.
- + If floodwaters rise around your car but the water is not moving, abandon the car and move to higher ground. Do not leave the car and enter moving water.
- + Avoid camping or parking along streams, rivers, and creeks during heavy rainfall. These areas can quickly flood with little warning.



## FLOOD WATCH

- + Flood Watch means “Be Aware” as conditions are right for flooding to occur in your area with little warning.
- + Turn on your TV/radio/cellphone weather channel. You will receive the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- + Know where to go. You may need to reach higher ground quickly and on foot.
- + Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit. Include a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies.
- + Prepare your home or business to keep water out with sandbags, plastic barriers, etc.
- + Bring in or secure outdoor furniture and move important indoor items to the highest possible floor to help protect flood water damage.
- + Disconnect electrical appliances and do not touch electrical equipment. If you are wet or standing in water you could be electrocuted.
- + If instructed, turn off your gas and electricity at the main switch or valve. This helps prevent fires and explosions from escaping gas.

## FLOOD WARNING

- + Flood Warning means “Take Action!” Flooding is either happening or will happen shortly.
- + Move immediately to higher ground or stay on high ground.
- + Evacuate if directed.
- + Avoid walking or driving through flood waters. If you approach flooded areas turn around and do not take an unnecessary risk. Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

## AFTER A FLOOD

- + Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- + Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded and watch out for debris. Floodwaters often erode roads, bridges and walkways.
- + Do not attempt to drive through areas that are still flooded.
- + Avoid standing water as it may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- + Photograph damage to your property for insurance purposes.



REFERENCES:  
[ready.gov/floods](https://ready.gov/floods)

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