

# Floods

## Be Safe at Home or on the Road

**MOST FLOOD DEATHS ARE CAUSED BY FLASH FLOODS, AND NEARLY HALF OF SUCH DEATHS OCCUR WHILE DRIVING. OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES TO MINIMIZE THE LIKELIHOOD OF INJURY, DEATH OR DAMAGE TO PROPERTY IN THE EVENT OF FLOODING.**

### KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

- Know your area's flood risk. If unsure, call your local Red Cross chapter or emergency management office to determine whether you live in a flood-prone area.

### COMMON TYPES OF FLOODING

**River Flooding:** These floods typically occur when the melting of winter snow coupled with heavy spring rainfall results in overfilled river basins. Heavy rainfalls from tropical storm systems may also produce river flooding.

**Coastal Flooding:** These floods are the result of ocean waters being driven inland, most commonly by tropical storms, or less commonly as a result of tidal waves driven by earthquakes.

**Urban Flooding:** These increasingly common floods are the result of urban/suburban sprawl, where developed land areas lose their ability to absorb rainfall. Development may increase runoff up to six times over what would occur naturally in its absence.

**Flash Flooding:** These floods commonly result from rainfall of exceptional intensity and duration, and may occur within minutes or a few hours of such rainfall. Other causes may be the failure of dams or levees, or the releases of ice jams.



### WATCHES, WARNINGS AND ADVISORIES

- A flood WATCH means a flood is possible in your area.
- A flood WARNING means flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- A flash flood WATCH means flash flooding is possible in your area. Be alert to signs of flooding and be ready to evacuate on a moment's notice.
- A flash flood WARNING means a flash flood is occurring or is imminent. Act quickly—you may have only seconds.
- An Urban or Small Stream ADVISORY means that flooding of small waterways, streets, low-lying areas, storm drains and underpasses is occurring. Avoid travel if possible.

### BEFORE A FLOOD OR FLASH FLOOD

- Learn flood warning signs and to recognize your community alert signals.
- If you live in a frequently flooded area, stockpile emergency building materials.
- Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains.
- Plan and practice an evacuation route.
- Develop an emergency communication plan between family members:
  - Choose an out-of-state friend or relative as a contact person in the event your family is separated and commit that person's phone number to memory.
  - Choose a meeting place away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
- Check to see if you have insurance that covers flooding.
- Keep insurance policies, documents and other valuables in a safe-deposit box.
- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit (see list that follows).

### DURING A FLOOD WATCH

- Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest storm information.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and jugs with clean water.
- Move your furniture and valuables to higher floors of your home.
- Fill your car's gas tank in case an evacuation notice is issued.
- If you are instructed to do so by authorities, turn off all utilities at the main switch and close the main gas valve.
- Get your preassembled emergency supplies.
- If told to leave, do so immediately.
- Be prepared to evacuate.



### AFTER A FLOOD

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

- Help neighbors who may require special assistance.
- Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage.
- Stay out of buildings surrounded by flood waters. When entering buildings, use extreme caution.
- Wear sturdy shoes and use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights—no open flames—when examining buildings.
- Examine walls, floors, doors and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes, that may have come into your home with the flood waters.
- Watch for loose plaster and ceilings that could fall.
- Take pictures of the damage—both to 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 from upstream.
- Pump out flooded basements gradually to avoid structural damage.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible.

### IF YOU'RE IN YOUR CAR

Never attempt to drive through a flooded area! Nearly half of all flood-related deaths are driving deaths. Remember, the force of water reduces your car's weight by 1,500 pounds for every foot the water rises—as little as two feet of moving water may carry most automobiles away.

- If you come to a flooded area, turn around and go another way.
- If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.
- Move to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks and storm drains. Do not drive around barricades—they are there for your safety!

## OTHER SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Throw out food that has come in contact with flood water.
- Boil drinking water before using.
- Pump out wells and test water purity before drinking.
- Avoid disaster areas—your presence may interfere with rescue operations.
- Inspect and dry out all electrical equipment before returning it to service.
- Report broken utility lines to the authorities.

## A DISASTER SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Portable, battery operated radio
- First aid kit and prescription medications
- Supply of water (one gallon per person, per day)
- Canned food and nonelectric can opener
- Credit cards and cash
- Special items for infants, elderly or disabled persons
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Cellular phone
- Sturdy shoes



Be prepared! Stop by your local True Value store today for the right tools, products and advice. And visit us online for practical safety tips and more.

### Emergency Phone Numbers

American Red Cross \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance company \_\_\_\_\_

Relative or friend \_\_\_\_\_

True Value store \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_



**FLOODS  
BE PREPARED**



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