

## Floods and Flooding

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural hazards. Some floods develop over a period of days, but flash floods can result in raging waters in just a few minutes. Flash floods carry a deadly cargo of rocks, mud, other debris and in some instances dangerous bacteria. Floods can occur without any visible rainfall. Mudslides are another danger created by flooding.



Be aware of flood hazards, especially if you live in a low-lying area, near water or downstream from a dam. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds or low-lying ground that appear harmless in dry weather can flood. Every state is at risk from this hazard.

### Know the Terms:

- **Flood Watch** - Flooding is possible. Stay tuned to NOAA radio or commercial radio or television for additional information.
- **Flash Flood Watch** - Flash flooding is possible. Move to higher ground. A flash flood could occur without any warning. Listen to NOAA radio or commercial radio or television for additional information.
- **Flood Warning** - Flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- **Flash Flood Warning** - A flash flood is occurring. Seek higher ground on foot immediately.
- **Urban and Small Stream Advisory** - Flooding of small streams, streets and low-lying areas is occurring.

### Essentials:

- Be prepared to evacuate when told to do so.
- Know the evacuation routes
- Discuss with your family what flooding is and how it may effect you.
- Choose an out of state contact for everyone to call to say they're OK.
- Identify those in your neighborhood or family who may require special assistance.
- Teach your family how to shut off water, gas and electricity to your home.
- If you live in flood prone areas or on top of the flood plain consider purchasing flood insurance. Make flood-proofing changes to your home or office where possible.
  - For more information in Utah, phone 435-581-3400 and ask for the State Flood Plain Management Officer.
  - National Flood Insurance is managed through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Make a record of all your personal property. Take photographs of or videotape your belongings and store these records in a safe location.
- Keep insurance policies, deeds, property records and other important papers in a safe place away from your home.

### During Heavy Rains:

- Be aware of flash floods. If there is any possibility of flash flood occurring, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Listen to radio or television stations for local information.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels and areas known to flood suddenly.
- If local authorities issue a flood watch, prepare to evacuate:
  - Secure your home.
  - If you have time, bring outdoor garden equipment and lawn furniture inside or tie it down.
  - Move essential items to the upper floors of your house.
  - If instructed, turn off utilities at the main switches or valves.
  - Do not disconnect electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
  - Fill your car with fuel.
  - Fill the bathtub with water in case water becomes contaminated or services cut off. Sterilize the bathtub first.
- Stay away from flood waters. They could be contaminated.
- Don't walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you must walk in a flooded area, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Don't drive into flooded areas. If flood waters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground, if you can do so safely. You and your vehicle can be quickly swept away as flood waters rise.

#### **AFTER A FLOOD:**

- Stay away from flood waters. The water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. The water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Stay away from moving water. Moving water only six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
- Be aware of areas where the flood waters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them to the power company.
- Stay away from disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers. One way to help is to give money to a disaster relief organization. Do not donate food, clothing or other personal items unless they are specifically requested.
- Continue listening to a battery powered radio for information about where to get assistance for housing, clothing and food. Outreach programs are often available to help you cope with the stresses of the situation.
- Consider your family's health and safety needs. Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with flood waters. Throw away food that has come in contact with flood water. Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Contact your insurance agent, if your policy covers your situation. Most insurance policies do not cover flooding. A separate flood insurance policy is required. To prepare for an insurance adjuster:
  - Take photos of or videotape your belongings and your home.
  - Locate the photos or video tapes you took before the incident.
  - Separate damaged and undamaged belongings.
  - Locate your financial records.
  - Keep detailed records of cleanup costs.