

YOUR HEALTH

YOUR SAFETY

OUR CONCERN

HIGH WATER: FLOODS



Floods are quite common in the US, especially since they can happen for so many reasons—thunderstorms, a debris dam causing a river to overflow, melting snow combined with rain, tropical cyclones...you name it. Nor should we forget flash flooding, which is all about speed. Flash floods happen within six hours of a storm, or following a sudden release of water, like a levee breaking or an ice/debris jam coming loose in a river. Unfortunately, there's not much we can do in the face of millions of gallons of water, except be prepared and get out of town.

The Antediluvian Period

When flood season looms near or you've just heard that first flood watch, it's time to get moving and prepare your home and household for the precipitous potentialities.

Batten Down the Hatches:

Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your household. Post all emergency phone numbers by the phone. Ask an out-of-state friend or relative to be the house contact in case your family/household becomes separated during the flood. Make sure everybody in the house knows who the contact person is and all their current information (full name, address, and phone number).

As to your property, there are a number of precautionary measures that you can implement far in advance of a flood—measures that make sense if your region floods regularly. Block floodwaters from infiltrating your drains, toilets, and other home sewer connections by installing backflow valves or plugs. Document your important possession in photos or on video. Store your valuable possessions and documents where they won't get damaged.



Loading the Arc: When the threat of a flood looms, the best thing you can be is prepared. Assemble a home emergency supply kit, which should include:

- Clean containers of water (5gal per person)
- 3-5 days' worth of non-perishable food
- Manual can opener
- First aid kit, including prescription and other special needs medications
- Battery-powered radio, flashlights, extra batteries
- Sleeping bags or blankets
- Water purifying supplies (chlorine or iodine tablets)
- Disposable cleaning cloths (i.e. baby wipes) in case bathing facilities are not available
- Baby supplies, if needed
- Rubber boots, sturdy shoes, raingear, and waterproof gloves
- Personal hygiene items (soap, toothpaste, feminine supplies, etc.)
- Insect repellent, screens, or long-sleeved/long-legged clothing to protect from mosquitoes that may flourish after the flood

It's impossible to know how bad the flood will be before it happens. That means you need a second emergency supply kit for your car, which includes everything in the home kit plus flares, jumper cables, maps, tools, and a fire extinguisher.



The Tide Is High

So what do you do during those 40 days and 40 nights of rain? Work on the novel? Play cards? Maybe, stay alive?

When a flood comes knocking on your door, make sure you know how to handle it. First, clean water is a must. Fill bathtubs, sinks, and any other containers with clean water in case the water supply becomes contaminated. Listen to the radio for flood information. **IF THERE IS AN EVACUATION ADVISORY, EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY.**

Avoid the floodwaters—don't walk or drive through them. Stay clean. Wash thoroughly after contact with floodwaters. Stay away from downed power lines and electrical wires. Watch out for animals, especially snakes.

Aftermath

The waters have receded and you've returned home...now what? Salvage and sanitize is the name of the game.

Before reentering, check for structural damage. Don't ignite matches or lighters right away—gas may be caught in pockets throughout the house. Should you smell gas or hear a hissing, open a window, get out of the house, and call the gas company from a neighbor's house. Keep the power off until an electrician has inspected the house. Check your sewer and water lines for damage. Throw out any food that was in contact with the flood. Boil water for consumption and washing. If it's safe, sanitize the house with bleach.

If you have flood insurance, call your agent and file a claim. Photograph any water in the house and keep a hold of the damaged property.

Terminology

Flash Flood: A life or property-threatening flood that happens with little or no natural warning in the flood area.

Flash Flood Watch: Possible flash flooding in the watch area.

Flash Flood Warning: Life or property threatening flooding will occur within 6hrs in warning area.

Urban/Small Stream Flood Advisory: There is flooding in the area which poses no threat to life or property



SOURCES:

<http://www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/index.shtm>

