



Factsheet: Floods

There are actions you can take to protect your family and keep your property losses to a minimum. The most important action is to make sure your family is safe.

Before a Flood

- Keep a battery-powered radio tuned to a local station, and follow emergency instructions. Get a NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) to monitor severe weather. After purchasing an NWR with "Specific Area Message Encoding" (**SAME**), program your city, county or parish code into the radio, to alert you of weather and other emergencies for those specific areas. The codes for the District of Columbia are listed below:

DC City	SAME #	NWR TRANSMITTER	FREQ.	CALL	WATTS
DC Washington DC	011001	Baltimore MD	162.400	KEC83	1000
DC Washington DC	011001	Wash. DC/Manassas VA	162.550	KHB36	1000

Buy Flood Insurance

One of the most important things you can do to protect your home and family before a flood is to purchase a flood insurance policy. You can obtain one through your insurance company or agent. Flood insurance is guaranteed through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Your homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage.

Don't wait until a flood is coming to purchase your policy. It normally takes 30 days after purchase for a flood insurance policy to go into effect. For more information about the NFIP and flood insurance, contact your insurance company or agent, or call the NFIP at **1-888-FLOOD29** or **TDD# 1-800-427-5593**.

Have Disaster Supplies on Hand

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries tuned to a local station, and follow emergency instructions.
- First aid kit and manual
- Emergency food and bottled water
- Non-electric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes

If you live in a frequently flooded area, take preventative measures and stockpile emergency building materials:

- Plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber, nails, hammer and saw, pry bar, shovels, and sandbags.
- Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains.
- As a last resort, use large corks or stoppers to plug showers, tubs, or basins.

Plan and practice an evacuation route. Learn flood-warning signs and your community's alert signals. Contact your local emergency management office or local American Red Cross chapter for a copy of the community flood evacuation plan. This plan should include information on the safest routes to shelters. Individuals living in flash flood areas should have several alternative routes. Request information on preparing for floods and flash floods.

Develop an emergency communication plan. In case family members are separated from one another during floods or flashfloods (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person. Make sure that all family members know how to respond after a flood or flash flood. Teach all family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water. Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police, fire department, and which radio station to tune to for emergency information. Be prepared to evacuate.

If time permits, here are other steps that you can take before the flood waters come:

- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary.
- Move valuables, such as papers, furs, jewelry, and clothing to upper floors or higher elevations.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with clean water. Sanitize the sinks and tubs first by using bleach. Rinse, and then fill with clean water.
- Bring outdoor possessions, such as lawn furniture, grills and trash cans inside, or tie them down securely.
- If the waters start to rise inside your house before you have evacuated, retreat to the second floor, the attic and, if necessary, the roof. Take dry clothing, a flashlight and a portable radio with you. Then, wait for help. Don't try to swim to safety; wait for rescuers to come to you.

Flood Mitigation Actions Checklist

Public Works/Utilities

- Protect or elevate ground-mounted transformers
- Elevate vulnerable equipment, electrical controls, and other equipment at wastewater treatment plants, potable water treatment plants, and pump stations
- For sewer lines in the floodplain, fasten and seal manhole covers to prevent floodwater infiltration
- Protect wells and other potable water from infiltration and flood damage by raising controls and well pipes
- Replace low bridges or other obstructions that may induce flooding of houses or businesses
- Move building contents to a higher floor or store outside of the floodplain

Residences

- Elevate existing residences above flood elevation on a new foundation
- Relocate residences outside floodplain
- Acquire and demolish residences
- Store important documents and irreplaceable personal objects (such as photographs) in waterproof containers or in safe locations to prevent damage
- Elevate or relocate furnaces, hot water heaters, and electrical panels
- Provide openings in foundation walls that allow floodwaters in and out, thus avoiding collapse
- For drains, toilets, and other sewer connections, install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters from entering home
- Buy and install sump pumps with back-up power

Businesses

- Elevate, floodproof, relocate or demolish buildings
- Store important documents, such as insurance papers and other business papers in safe locations to prevent damage
- Elevate or relocate furnaces, hot water heaters, electrical panels, and other equipment
- Provide openings in foundation walls to allow floodwaters in and out, thus avoiding collapse
- For drains, toilets, and other sewer connections, install backflow valves or plugs; these can be tested by a plumber before a flood by plugging the sewer drain and filling waste pipes with clean water
- Backflow of sewer lines can occur outside of the flooded areas, particularly where there are combined sanitary or storm sewer systems; check with the city or county engineer for advice
- Move inventory or reduce inventory that may be flooded; if possible elevate, relocate or protect equipment
- Identify, relocate or elevate stored hazardous materials or other chemicals to prevent flood damage

Contact the District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency, Hazard Mitigation Officer on (202) 673-2101 ext. 1163 for additional information regarding personal preparedness and protection measures.