

# Flooding

The American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)) has prepared this information to encourage you to take precautions to help keep you safe and speed your recovery after a disaster. You can locate shelter information, get assistance locating a loved one, and get help getting back on your feet by visiting the above website, and clicking on “Get Assistance.” If you do not have access to the internet during this time of disaster, please call your program provider for assistance accessing this information.

## Before the flood

- Plan for evacuation. Know where you are going and how to get there.
- Prepare your home for a flood. Call your local building department or office of emergency management for information.
- Purchase flood insurance.
- Keep all insurance policies and a list of valuable items in a safe place. Take photos or a videotape of the valuables you keep in your home. Listen to your radio or television for reports of flood danger.
- Keep your car filled with gas.

## When a flood does occur

- Do NOT try to walk or drive through flooded areas. Water can be deeper than it appears and water levels rise quickly. Follow official emergency evacuation routes. If your car stalls in floodwater, get out quickly and move to higher ground.
- Follow evacuation orders and avoid floodwaters. Keep children out of the water.
- Stay away from moving water; moving water six inches deep, or up to your ankles, can sweep you off your feet. Cars are easily swept away in just two feet of water.
- Stay away from disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers.
- Stay away from downed power lines, damaged gas lines, cracks in building foundations or other property damage.
- If your home is flooded, turn the utilities off until emergency officials tell you it is safe to turn them on. Do not pump the basement out until floodwater recedes. Avoid weakened floors, walls and rooftops.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with floodwaters. Be particularly cautious at night when it may be harder to see the danger.

## After a flood

- Wait to return home until officials say it is safe to do so.
- Check for damage. Check for structural damage before re-entering your home. Contact the appropriate professionals immediately if you suspect damage to water, gas, electric and sewer lines.
- Wear gloves and boots when cleaning up.
- Certain materials, such as cleaning products, paint, batteries, contaminated fuel and damaged fuel containers can be dangerous. Check with local authorities for assistance with safe disposal.
- Open all doors and windows. Use fans if possible to air out the building and thoroughly dry out the building's interior. Portable dehumidifiers are useful, and rental costs may be covered under your flood policy. An air conditioner can also be used to start the drying-out process.
- Wash all clothes and linens in hot water.
- Discard mattresses and stuffed furniture. They can't be adequately cleaned.

- Wash dirt and mud from walls, counters and hard surfaced floors with soap and water. Then disinfect by wiping surfaces with a solution of one cup bleach per gallon of water.
- Prevent mold and remove wet contents immediately. Wet carpeting, furniture, bedding and any other items holding moisture or water inside the building can develop mold within 24 to 48 hours. If an item has been wet for less than 48 hours, help control mold growth by cleaning with a phenol or pine-oil cleaner (non-ammonia detergent, soap or commercial cleaner) and disinfecting with a 10 percent bleach solution (1-1/2 cups of bleach in a gallon of water). Items should then be completely dried and monitored for several days for any fungal growth and odors. If any mold develops, throw the item away.
- Discard all food that has come into contact with floodwater. Canned foods are alright, but thoroughly wash the can before opening. If unsure, discard the food.
- If your well is flooded, your tap water is probably unsafe. If you have public water, the health department will let you know, through radio and television, if your water is not safe to drink. Until your water is safe, use clean bottled water. Do not use water that might be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.
- If the walls are damaged, take photographs of the baseboards. Then remove the baseboards. Knock small holes at floor level in the drywall, between the wall studs. This will permit moisture trapped behind the drywall to seep out and start drying.
- Have your furnace checked for damage. Your water heater may work, but if the floodwater covered part of or the entire tank, the insulation between the walls may be damaged. Obtain an estimate to replace the damaged furnace and water heater.
- Contact your local building inspectors or planning office or county clerk's office to get more information on local building requirements before repairing your structure. If you can't find a local contact, call your state National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) coordinator. Contact information can be found at [www.floods.org/statepocs/stcoor.asp](http://www.floods.org/statepocs/stcoor.asp).
- Do not approach wild animals that take refuge in your home. Wild animals often seek refuge from floodwaters on upper levels of homes and have been known to remain after water recedes. Call your local animal control office or wildlife resource office to handle the situation.

## File your flood insurance claim

- Call the insurance agent who handles your flood insurance to file a claim. Have the following information with you when you place your call: (1) the name of your insurance company (your agent may write policies for more than one company); (2) your policy number; and (3) a telephone number/e-mail address where you can be reached.
- Take photos of any water in the house and damaged personal property. If necessary, place these items outside the home. Your adjuster will need evidence of the damage and damaged items (e.g., cut swatches from carpeting) to prepare your repair estimate.
- Make a list of damaged or lost items and include their age and value where possible. If possible, supply receipts for those lost items to the adjuster. Officials may require disposal of damaged items. If so, keep a swatch or other sample of the items for the adjuster.

## Other important information

- FEMA: (800) 621-3362
- American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/flood>