



FLOODS

NOAA NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

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Why should I be concerned about flooding?

Floods kill more people in the United States on average than all other types of weather. In recent years, only heat fatalities have surpassed flood fatalities in the annual statistics. Floods can roll boulders the size of cars, tear out trees, destroy buildings and bridges, and pose a significant threat to human lives.

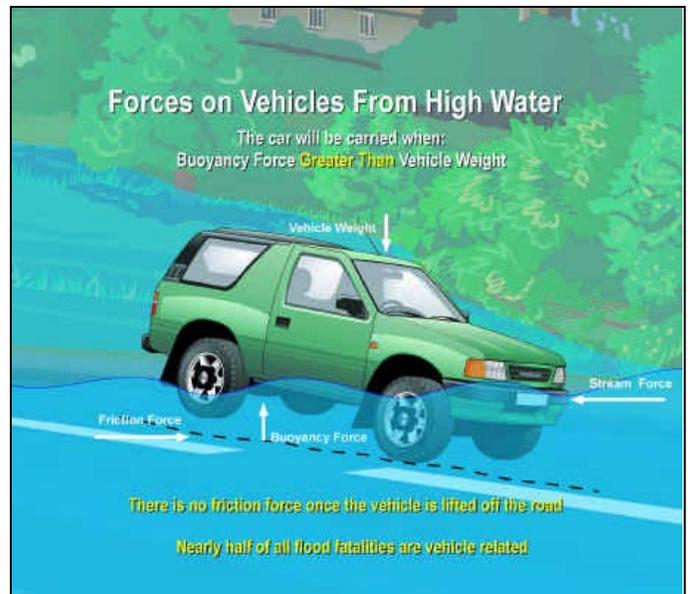
What are Flash Floods?

A flash flood is a rapid rise of water along a stream or low-lying area. Flash flood damage and most fatalities tend to occur in areas immediately adjacent to a stream, due to heavy rain, dam breaks, levee failures, rapid snowmelt, and ice jams. Additionally, heavy rain falling on steep terrain can weaken soil and cause mud slides, damaging homes, roads, and property.

Flash Flood Risk in Your Car, Truck, or Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV)



Almost half of flash flood fatalities occur in vehicles. Contrary to popular belief, many people don't realize one to two feet of water can float most vehicles. If the water is moving rapidly, the car, truck or SUV can be swept away.



Flash Flood Risks at Home, Work, or School

Since many flash floods occur along small streams, you can determine your risk by knowing your proximity to streams. Flooding can be caused by rain falling several miles upstream and then moving downstream rapidly.

Densely populated areas have a high risk for flash floods. The construction of buildings, highways, driveways, and parking lots increases runoff by reducing the amount of rain absorbed by the ground. Sometimes, streams through cities and towns are routed underground into storm drains. During periods of heavy rainfall, storm drains may become overwhelmed and flood roads and building. Low spots, such as underpasses, underground parking garages, and basements can become death traps.



Flash Flood Risk to Recreation (Camping, Hiking, Boating, Fishing)

Listen to weather forecasts and keep away from streams if thunderstorms have happened or have been predicted upstream from where you are. A creek only 6 inches deep in mountainous areas can swell to a 10-foot deep raging river in less than an hour if a thunderstorm inundates the area with intense rainfall.

When thunderstorms are in your area, stay alert for rapidly changing conditions. You may notice the stream start to rise quickly and become muddy. You may hear a roaring sound upstream that may be a flood wave moving rapidly toward you. Head immediately for higher ground and don't be swept away by rising water.

Turn around. Don't Drown!

What are River Floods?



A flood is defined as “the inundation of a normally dry area caused by an increased water level in an established watercourse”. River flooding is often caused by:

- Excessive rain from tropical systems making landfall
- Persistent thunderstorms over the same area for an extended period of time
- Combined rainfall and snowmelt
- Ice jams

What You Can Do Before a Flood ...When you receive a Flood Watch

- A flood watch is issued when flooding is possible within the watch area. When a flood watch is issued, you should be aware of potential flood hazards. Everyone in a watch area should be ready to respond and act quickly
- Have an evacuation plan in place BEFORE flooding occurs. Flooded roads may cut off your escape route. Head for higher ground before the water becomes too deep.
- Know your flood risk and the elevation above which flooding occurs
- Find out if you are located in a high, medium, or low flood risk area
- Store drinking water in food-grade containers
- Keep first-aid supplies and prescription medicines on hand



What You Can Do During a Flood ...When you receive a Flood Warning

- If advised to evacuate do so immediately! Families should use only one vehicle to avoid being separated and reduce traffic jams. Move to a safe area before access is cut off by flood water.
- Get out of areas subject to flooding. This includes dips, low spots, canyons, washes, etc.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.
- DO NOT DRIVE AROUND A BARRICADE. Barricades are put there to protect you.
- If your vehicle stalls, leave it immediately and move to higher ground. Rapidly rising water may engulf the vehicle and its occupants sweeping them away. Cars can be swept away by as little as 12 inches of water.

What You Can Do After a Flood



- Get necessary medical care at the nearest hospital.
- Do not visit disaster areas. Your presence might hamper rescue and other emergency operations.
- If your power is out use flashlights, not candles.
- Report broken utility lines to appropriate authorities.
- Boil water before drinking.
- If fresh or canned food comes in contact with flood waters, discard it.



On the web:

- Flood Safety.....www.floodsafety.noaa.gov
- National Weather Service Quad Cities..... www.weather.gov/quadcities
- National Weather Service..... www.weather.gov
- Red Cross Preparedness www.redcross.org
- FEMA..... www.fema.gov