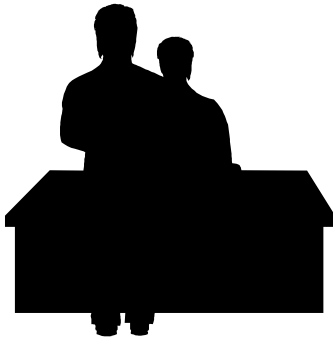




## Fact Sheet — Floods and Flash Floods



Mitigation pays. It includes any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or lessen the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. Investing in mitigation steps now, such as constructing barriers like levees and purchasing flood insurance, will help reduce the amount of structural damage to your home and the financial loss from building and crop damage should a flood or flash flood occur.

### Before

- Find out from your local emergency management office or Red Cross chapter if you live in a flood-prone area.
- Ask if your property is above or below the flood stage water level and learn about the history of flooding for your region.
- Learn flood warning signs and your community alert signals.
- Request information on preparing for floods and flash floods.
- If you live in a frequently flooded area, 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.
- Contact the local emergency management office or local American Red Cross chapter for a copy of the community flood evacuation plan. Plan and practice an evacuation route. This plan tells the safest routes to shelters. Individuals living in flash flood areas should have several alternative routes.
- Have disaster supplies on hand.

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Adapted by UF/IFAS from:  
Federal Emergency  
Management Agency  
(FEMA)



“Take precautions to protect your family.”

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Emergency food and water
- Nonelectric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes

- Develop an emergency communication plan. Family members can be separated from one another during floods or flash floods, for example, 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 911, police or fire department and which radio station gives emergency information.
- Learn about the National Flood Insurance Program. Ask your insurance agent about flood insurance. Homeowners' policies do not cover flood damage.

“Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Do not return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.”

### During a Flood Watch

- Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest storm reports.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and jugs with clean water in case water becomes contaminated.
- Bring outdoor belongings such as patio furniture indoors.
- Move valuable household possessions to the upper floors or to safe ground if time permits.
- If you are instructed to do so by local authorities, turn off all utilities at the main switch and close the main gas valve.
- Be prepared to evacuate.

## During a Flood

### Indoors

- Turn on battery-operated radio or television to get the latest emergency information.
- Get your preassembled emergency supplies.
- If told to leave, do so immediately.

### Outdoors

- Climb to high ground and stay there.
- Avoid walking through any floodwaters. If it is moving swiftly, even water 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet.

### In a Car

- If you come to a flooded area, turn around and go another way.
- If your car stalls, leave it immediately and climb to higher ground. Many deaths result from attempts to move stalled vehicles.

## During an Evacuation

- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Evacuation is much simpler and safer before flood waters become too deep for ordinary vehicles to drive through.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for evacuation instructions.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Shortcuts may be blocked.
- Leave early enough to avoid being marooned by flooded roads.

### After

- Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Listen to a radio or television and don't return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.
- Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance: infants, elderly people and people with disabilities.
- Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage.
- Stay out of buildings if flood waters remain around the building.
- When entering buildings, use extreme caution.

“See Section 4.9  
“Meal Preparation  
and Food Safety  
after a Flood” in this  
handbook for more  
information.”

- Wear sturdy shoes and use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings.
  - Examine walls, floors, doors and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.
  - Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes, that may have come into your home with the flood waters. Use a stick to poke through debris.
  - Watch for loose plaster and ceilings that could fall.
- o Take pictures of damage to the house and its contents for insurance claims.
  - o Look for fire hazards:
    - Broken or leaking gas lines
    - Flooded electrical circuits
    - Submerged furnaces or electrical appliances
    - Flammable or explosive materials coming from upstream
  - o Throw away any foods that have come in contact with flood waters. It is a good idea to dispose even of canned goods.
  - o Pump out flooded basements gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.
  - o Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are health hazards.

## Inspecting Utilities in a Damaged Home

Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.

Look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. Don't step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker; call an electrician for advice.

Check for sewage and water line damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. For water pipe damaged contact the water company and avoid water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.