

Flood Preparedness and Safety

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), flooding is the most common and widespread of all natural disasters. It can happen anywhere and at anytime, with devastating results to life and property.

Floods occur in low-lying areas most commonly valleys, near rivers and streams, and even in small creeks and dry streambeds. Flooding along rivers can occur seasonally. Know the location of storm water inlets, culverts or other storm water transfer points in your surrounding area. These areas can have tremendously powerful currents and can flow with such force they can pull you under the flowing current.

It is important to know what to do before, during, and after a flood:

Before a Flood

Do you know the elevation of your property and whether forecasted flood levels are likely to affect your home?

Move the main breaker or fuse box and utility meters above the flood level determined for your neighborhood. This work needs to be done by a qualified electrician in coordination with the power company. Never attempt to do any electrical work on your own without proper permits and a licensed electrician. An evaluation of your electrical meter and service equipment should be made during non-threatening conditions. Your local building department or DNR office should have maps indicating recorded high water levels in your community/area. Move appliances and valuables out of basements or flood-prone lower levels. Learn how to shut off electricity, gas and water to your home.

Have a Plan

Develop a personal or family evacuation plan (this should include all businesses, especially those that operate multiple shifts). Make sure family members know where to go in the event of a flood. The plan should include how family members will contact one another if separated. Make sure children know the emergency plan and, if old enough, can execute it without you.

Prepare a family disaster supplies kit for use in the event of a flood or other disaster. Parents should have each child create their own personal pack to include favorite toys and any other personal items (within reason) that will help to comfort them.

* Please note: In the event of a fire disaster, do not stop for a kit or other belongings, just get out as quickly and safely as possible - do not go back in until the fire department says it is safe to do so.

Your emergency supplies can be kept in a plastic tub, backpack, small suitcase, or other suitable container. Some items to consider including are:

- First aid kit
- Flash light and extra batteries
- Bring a cell phone and cell phone charger with you if possible
- Battery operated radio, or weather radio, with extra batteries
- Prescription medications
- Credit card and cash (or have these items in a readily accessible location as you leave)
- Personal Identification - driver's license
- An extra set of house and car keys
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Signal flare - emergency road flare will work
- Specialty needs such as; baby formula, hearing aids, eyeglasses or any other items necessary to meet specific physical needs
- Simple kitchen utensils to include can opener, spoons, forks, etc.
- Change of clothes for each family member
- Tools and other accessories
- Personal hygiene products such as toilet paper, diapers, soap, toothpaste, and toothbrushes
- Simple entertainment items such as cards, small games, books, etc.
- Bottled drinking water
- Nonperishable food items

Further information on disaster preparedness kits can be found on the following NFPA and Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) websites:

NFPA's Disaster Preparedness Kit Supply List:

<http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1781&itemID=42393&URL=Research%20&%20Reports/Fact%20sheets/Risk%20Watch:%20Natural%20Disasters/General%20Preparedness>

FEMA's How to Assemble a Disaster Preparedness Kit video:

www.fema.gov/medialibrary/media_records/727

Kids Activity Survival Kit:

www.fema.gov/kids/dizkit.htm

During the Flood

Be alert for flood indicators such as rapidly rising water on streets, county roads, highways, bridges and low-lying areas. During a flood warning, take the following precautions:

- If advised, evacuate to an area of higher ground immediately.
- Stay away from flooded areas, even if the water seems to be receding.

- NEVER walk, swim or drive through moving water. Floodwater currents are very powerful and can easily carry people and vehicles with them and can washout roadways.
- Watch for debris being carried in flooded areas.
- Use flashlights instead of candles.

After the Flood

BE CAUTIOUS!

- Keep an eye on children and make sure they don't play around high water, storm drains, ravines, or culverts - as long as water is visible and flowing there will be currents.
- Throw away any food that may have come in contact with floodwater or perishable food that was not refrigerated at a safe temperature. Only use water from identified safe sources; like bottled water or water that has been boiled, or properly distilled until you know that your tap water isn't contaminated.
- Before re-entering a home damaged from a flood: ensure the electricity is off at the fuse box or main breaker until your home has adequately dried; check for gas leaks; examine your home for fire hazards; inspect the floors, doors, windows and walls for cracks or other damage.
- **When in doubt about the integrity of your home/building - stay out!** Your life and the lives of your family members are worth more than any item(s) you might be trying to retrieve.

The North Shore Fire Department's Public Education Office can be reached at jglanz@nsfire.org or 414-228-0292, should you have questions regarding Flood Preparedness and Safety, or other fire and life safety questions.

www.nsfire.org www.nfpa.org www.fema.gov www.glendale-wi.org