

Be Red Cross Ready

Flood Safety Checklist

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters. Conditions that cause floods include heavy or steady rain for several hours or days that saturates the ground. Flash floods occur suddenly due to rapidly rising water along a stream or low-lying area.

Know the Difference

Flood/Flash Flood Watch—Flooding or flash flooding is possible in your area.

Flood/Flash Flood Warning—Flooding or flash flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area.

What should I do?



- Listen to area radio and television stations and a NOAA Weather Radio for possible flood warnings and reports of flooding in progress or other critical information from the National Weather Service (NWS).
- Be prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice.
- When a flood or flash flood warning is issued for your area, head for higher ground and stay there.
- Stay away from floodwaters. If you come upon a flowing stream where water is above your ankles, stop, turn around and go another way. Six inches of swiftly moving water can sweep you off of your feet.
- If you come upon a flooded road while driving, turn around and go another way. If you are caught on a flooded road and waters are rising rapidly around you, get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground. Most cars can be swept away by less than two feet of moving water.
- Keep children out of the water. They are curious and often lack judgment about running water or contaminated water.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood danger.
- Because standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flooding, it's important to have protection from the floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact the U.S. For more information on flood insurance, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program Web site at www.FloodSmart.gov.

What supplies do I need?



- Water—at least a 3-day supply; one gallon per person per day
- Food—at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, cane)
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, deed/lease to home, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Map(s) of the area
- Baby supplies (bottles, formula, baby food, diapers)
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowl)
- Tools/supplies for securing your home
- Extra set of car keys and house keys
- Extra clothing, hat and sturdy shoes
- Rain gear
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Camera for photos of damage

What do I do after a flood?



- Return home only when officials have declared the area safe.
- Before entering your home, look outside for loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damage.
- Parts of your home may be collapsed or damaged. Approach entrances carefully. See if porch roofs and overhangs have all their supports.
- Watch out for wild animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into your home with the floodwater.
- If you smell natural or propane gas or hear a hissing noise, leave immediately and call the fire department.
- If power lines are down outside your home, do not step in puddles or standing water.
- Keep children and pets away from hazardous sites and floodwater.
- Materials such as cleaning products, paint, batteries, contaminated fuel and damaged fuel containers are hazardous. Check with local authorities for assistance with disposal to avoid risk.
- During cleanup, wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.
- Make sure your food and water are safe. Discard items that have come in contact with floodwater, including canned goods, water bottles, plastic utensils and baby bottle nipples. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Do not use water that could be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.
- Contact your local or state public health department for specific recommendations for boiling or treating water in your area after a disaster as water may be contaminated.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community experiences a flood, or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through RedCross.org/SafeandWell to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call **1-866-GET-INFO** to register yourself and your family.

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Returning Home After a Hurricane or Flood

Preparing to return home after evacuating will keep you safer while inspecting and cleaning up the damage to your home. Before traveling, ensure local officials have declared that it's safe to enter your community and that you have the supplies you will need. Follow the suggestions below for returning to, inspecting and cleaning your home.

Items to Take When Returning Home:

- Government-issued photo ID and proof of address
- Important phone numbers
- Bottled water and non-perishable foods
- First aid kit
- Cleanser/ hand cleaning gel for personal use
- Hygiene products and toilet paper
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Long sleeved shirts, long pants, sturdy waterproof boots and work gloves
- Flashlight, portable radio and extra batteries
- Cameras for photos of damage for insurance claims

Before Returning



- Find out if it is safe to enter your community or neighborhood. Follow the advice of your local authorities.
- Carry plenty of cash. ATMs may not work and stores may not be able to accept credit or debit cards.
- Bring supplies such as flashlights, batteries, bottled water and non-perishable foods in case utilities are out.
- Create back-up communication plans with family and friends in case you are unable to call from affected areas.
- Plan for delays when traveling. Bring extra food, water, pillows, blankets and other items that will make the trip more comfortable. Keep the fuel tank of your vehicle as full as possible in case gas stations are crowded, out of fuel or closed.
- Carry a map to help you route around heavy traffic or impassable roads.
- Find out if local medical facilities are open and if emergency services are functioning again. Do NOT call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number to do this.
- Understand that recovery takes time. Focus on the positive and have patience. Others will have similar frustrations.

First Inspection



- If possible, leave children and pets with a relative or friend. If not, keep them away from hazards and floodwater.
- Beware of rodents, snakes, insects and other animals that may be on your property or in your home.
- Before entering your home, look outside for damaged power lines, gas lines, foundation cracks and other exterior damage. It may be too dangerous to enter the home.
- Smell for gas. If you smell natural gas or propane, or hear a hissing noise, leave immediately and contact the fire department.
- If your home was flooded, assume it is contaminated with mold. Mold increases health risks for those with asthma, allergies or other breathing conditions.
- Open doors and windows. Let the house air out before staying inside for any length of time if the house was closed for more than 48 hours.
- Turn the main electrical power and water systems off until you or a professional can ensure that they are safe. NEVER turn the power on or off, or use an electrical tool or appliance while standing in water.
- Check the ceiling and floor for signs of sagging. Water may be trapped in the ceiling or floors may be unsafe to walk on.

Using Generators Safely

- When using a portable generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a portable generator to a home's electrical system.
- If you are considering getting a generator, get advice from a professional, such as an electrician. Make sure that the generator you purchase is rated for the power that you think you will need.

Cleaning Your Home



- Wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.
- Be careful when moving furnishings or debris since they may be water logged and heavier.
- Throw out all food, beverages and medicine exposed to flood waters and mud, including canned goods and containers with food or liquid that have been sealed shut. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Some cleaning solutions can cause toxic fumes and other hazards if mixed together. If you smell a strong odor or your eyes water from the fumes or mixed chemicals, open a window and get out of your home.
- Throw out items that absorb water and cannot be cleaned or disinfected (e.g. mattresses, carpeting, cosmetics, stuffed animals and baby toys).
- Remove all drywall and insulation that has been in contact with flood waters.
- Clean hard surfaces (e.g. flooring, countertops and appliances) thoroughly with hot water and soap or a detergent.
- Return to as many personal and family routines as possible.

Caution: Carbon Monoxide Kills

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace, or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating or cooking are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, electric shock and fire.

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