

Mecklenburg County ARES[®]

Are You Prepared For a Flood or Flash Flood?

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters. Conditions that contribute to 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.

You will likely hear weather forecaster's use these terms when floods are predicted in your community:

- 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.

Floods Can Take Several Hours to Days to Develop. Flash Floods Can Take Only a Few Minutes to a Few Hours to Develop

When a Flood WATCH is issued for your area . . .

- Move your belongings and valuables to higher floors of your home.
- Fill your car's gas tank, in case an evacuation notice is issued.
- Check the contents of your 72 hour Emergency Kit and stow it in your vehicle.

When a Flood WARNING Is Issued for your area . . .

- Listen to area radio, television stations, weather spotter repeaters and a NOAA Weather Radio for possible flood warnings and reports of flooding in progress or other critical information from the National Weather Service. If told to evacuate, do so as soon as possible.

When a Flash Flood WATCH Is Issued . . .

- Be alert to signs of flash flooding, check your Emergency Kit and be ready to evacuate on a moment's notice.

When a Flash Flood WARNING Is Issued . . .

- If you think it has already started, evacuate immediately. You may have only seconds to escape. Act quickly!
- Move to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks, and storm drains. Do not drive around barricades . . . they are there for your safety.

- If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.¹

Prepare a Family Disaster Plan

- Check to see if you have insurance that covers flooding. If not, find out how to get flood insurance.
- Keep insurance policies, documents, and other valuables in a safety-deposit.
- Assemble a 72 hour Emergency Kit, which has everything you and your family needs to survive for 3 days.

General Flood Safety

- 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.

Consider all flood water to be contaminated. Sewage and petroleum products could be present.

- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood danger.

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!
- Contact your local or state public health department to see if your water supply might be contaminated. You may need to boil or treat it before use. Do not use water that could be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula!

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