

Steps to Take

- Before the Flood
- During the Flood
- After the Flood

What to know and how to prepare before a flood

Terms You Should Know

Flood Watch:

Flooding is possible. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

Flash Flood Watch:

Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground; listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

Flood Warning:

Flooding is occurring or will occur soon; if advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

Flash Flood Warning:

A flash flood is occurring; seek higher ground on foot immediately.

What to do before the flood:

Emergency Steps:

1. If flooding is imminent, the number one rule in a flood is to keep yourself safe.
2. 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.
3. Teach all family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water.
4. Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police, fire department, and which radio station to tune to for emergency information.
5. Develop an emergency communication plan. In case family members are separated from one another during floods or flash floods. (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school) Have a plan for getting back together.
6. When you gather your insurance papers for safekeeping, also gather any other important papers such as deeds or stock certificates that you may be keeping in the house.
7. Move any valuable items out of your basement. Flood insurance only covers items normally found in a basement, such as a furnace or washer and dryer. Personal items are not covered.
8. Create an emergency kit, with a large flashlight, a battery powered radio, spare batteries, candles, waterproof matches, etc. Even if you never experience a flood, you'll be glad to have this kit in a power outage.

9. If waters rise in your house before you can leave safely, move to the highest level necessary—even the roof. Take extra clothing, your radio, a flashlight and, if possible, food.
10. If you have time, turn off electricity at your breaker or fuse box and close the main gas valve; get valuables (furs, jewelry, important papers) to a higher level; fill bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with water. (Sanitize tubs and sinks with bleach, rinse and then fill); and bring outdoor possessions (lawn furniture, grills, etc) inside or tie them down securely.
11. Keep away from downed power lines and any other electrical wires—electrocution is always a major cause of death in floods.

Preparing Before the Flood

Hazard mitigation is action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, etc.

Top 3 Things to Do:

1. Avoid building or purchasing a structure in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce the structure.
2. Purchase Flood Insurance - Standard homeowners policies do not cover flood damage!
3. Retrofit your Property
 - a. Elevation - Raising your house so that the lowest floor is above the flood level.
 - b. Wet Floodproofing - Making uninhabited portions of your house resistant to flood damage and allowing water to enter during flooding
 - c. Relocation - Moving your house out of the floodplain to higher ground where it will not be exposed to flooding
 - d. Dry Floodproofing - Sealing your house to prevent flood waters from entering
 - e. Levees and Floodwalls - Building a floodwall or levee around your house to hold back flood water.
 - f. Demolition - Tearing down your damaged structure and either rebuilding properly on the same property or buying or building a house elsewhere.

Source:

<http://www.fema.gov>

During a Flood - What you should know!

If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without warnings.

Prepare to evacuate:

- Secure your home and relocate animals to a safe place on higher ground. . If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Protect/relocate stock and equipment on commercial/industrial premises.
- Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water. Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances and close the main gas valve.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving.
- Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Before crossing a river, either on foot or in a vehicle, check whether the water level is rising. This is especially necessary if it is already raining, but remember that there could be a storm further upstream and floodwaters could be on the way.
- Do not drive into flooded areas.
- If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely.
- Never ignore "road closed" signs.
- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUV's) and pick-ups.

If your home is flooded, you should:

- Avoid pumping the basement until floodwater recedes.
- Avoid weakened structures, particularly floors, walls and rooftops.
- If you find a wild animal in your home, do not trap or corner it. Sick or injured animals may be dangerous.

If drinking water becomes an issue, you should:

- Fill bathtubs, sinks, and jugs with clean water *before* water becomes contaminated.
- If your well is flooded, assume the water in your home is contaminated.
- If you are on public water, the health department will let you know, through local media, if your water is not safe to drink.
- Until your water is safe, use clean bottled water that has been stored less than 6 months in tightly sealed containers. Plan for one gallon per person per day.
- **If contaminated water is clear**, boil it for 10 minutes to kill disease-causing bacteria and parasites, or add 1/8 teaspoon household bleach per gallon of water. Let sit for 1/2 hour.
- **If contaminated water is cloudy**, pour it through a coffee filter and then boil it for 10 minutes. If you can't boil it, filter it and add 1/4 teaspoon of bleach per gallon. Let it sit for 1 hour.

Source:

<http://www.fema.gov>

After a Flood: The First Steps

Your home has been flooded. Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers still exist. Here are some things to remember in the days ahead.

- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage.
- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded
 - Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
 - Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may also hide animals and/or sharp objects. Avoid walking or driving through it.
- Help a neighbor who may require special assistance--infants, elderly people, and people with disabilities. Elderly people and people with disabilities may require additional assistance. People who care for them or who have large families may need additional assistance in emergency situations.
- Check for injuries. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury. If you must move an unconscious person, first stabilize the neck and back, then call for help immediately.
- Roads may still be closed, because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Emergency Services will place barricades to block roads as needed for your protection, but this could take Emergency Services quite a bit of time to cover all areas, so use good judgment. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
- Keep listening to the radio for news about what to do, where to go, or places to avoid.
- Use the phone only to report life-threatening emergencies.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters. Floodwaters often undermine foundations causing sinking. Floors can crack or break and buildings can collapse.
- Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to the power company.
- Stay off the streets. If you must go out, watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks. Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.

Obtain a free copy of the book *Repairing Your Flooded Home* available at City Hall, 10th Floor through the Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department or through the American Red Cross. This book will tell you:

- How to enter your home safely.
- How to protect your home and belongings from further damage.
- How to record damage to support insurance claims and requests for assistance.
- How to check for gas or water leaks and how to have service restored.
- How to clean up appliances, furniture, floors and other belongs.

Before You Enter Your Home

Walk carefully around the outside and check for loose power lines, gas leaks, and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before entering. Before entering your home make sure that you are wearing sturdy shoes. The most common injury following a disaster is cut feet.

Do not enter if:

- You smell gas.
- Floodwaters remain around the building.
- Your home was damaged by fire and the authorities have not declared it safe.

Going Inside Your Home

When you go inside your home, there are certain things you should and should not do. Enter the home carefully and check for damage. Be aware of loose boards and slippery floors. The following items are other things to check inside your home:

1) Give your Home First Aid

- **Turn on a battery powered flashlight before entering the house.** The battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.
- **Turn off the gas.** If you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing sound, open a window and leave immediately. Turn off the main gas valve from the outside, if you can. Call the gas company from a neighbor's residence. If you shut off the gas supply at the main valve, you will need a professional to turn it back on. Do not smoke or use oil, gas lanterns, candles, or torches for lighting inside a damaged home until you are sure there is no leaking gas or other flammable materials present.
- **Turn off the Electricity.** Do not check the electrical system if you are wet, standing in water, or unsure of your safety. If possible, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If the situation is unsafe, leave the building and call for help. Do not turn on the lights until you are sure they're safe to use. You may want to have an electrician inspect your wiring.
- **Roof, foundation, and chimney cracks.** If it looks like the building may collapse, leave immediately.
- **Water and sewage systems.** If pipes are damaged, turn off the main water valve. Check with local authorities before using any water; the water could be contaminated. Pump out wells and have the water tested by authorities before drinking. Do not flush toilets until you know that sewage lines are intact.
- **Seek necessary medical care at the nearest hospital or clinic.** Contaminated floodwaters lead to a greater possibility of infection. Severe injuries will require medical attention.
- **Appliances.** If appliances are wet, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. Then, unplug appliances and let them dry out. Have appliances checked by a professional before using them again.
- **Report broken utility lines to the appropriate authorities.** Reporting potential hazards will get the utilities turned off as quickly as possible, preventing further hazard and injury.
- **Food and other supplies.** Throw out all food and other supplies that you suspect may have become contaminated or come in to contact with floodwater. Some canned foods may be salvageable. If the cans are dented or damaged, throw them away. Food contaminated by floodwaters can cause severe infections.

- **Your basement.** If your basement has flooded, pump it out gradually (about one third of the water per day) to avoid damage. The walls may collapse and the floor may buckle if the basement is pumped out while the surrounding ground is still waterlogged.
- **Open cabinets.** Be alert for objects that may fall.
- **Service damaged sewage systems** as soon as possible to reduce the risk of serious health hazards.

2) Get Organized

- **Call your insurance agent.** Take pictures of damages. Keep good records of repair and cleaning costs.
- **Start Listing the Damage - Take Pictures of Everything!**
- **Check for structural damage**
- **Ask the Big Question** - Odds are that the area where you live will flood again. Before you spend a lot of money and effort repairing and rebuilding, ask yourself, "Do I really want to be flooded again?" If you think that you would be better off in a different location, talk to you local government or disaster assistance officials about help rebuilding where flood can no longer damage your home.
- **Plan your Recovery**

3) Dry Out Your Home

- a. **Open the house**
 - Open closet and cabinet doors
 - Use fans
 - Run dehumidifiers
 - Use desiccants
 - Call a contractor

b. Sort Contents and Discard Debris

Should I throw them out? (Items soaked by floodwater)

Usually

Mattresses, pillows
Foam Rubber
Large carpets, carpet padding
Upholstered couches and chairs
Books and paper products

Always

Food
Cosmetics
Medicines and medical supplies
Stuffed Animals
Baby toys

c. Drain and dry your ceilings, walls, and floor. The method depends upon the material type. Please refer to *Repairing Your Flooded Home* for details.

4) Restore Utilities

5) Clean and Disinfect Everything - The walls, floors, closets, shelves, contents--every flooded part of your house--should be completely washed and disinfected.

6) Check on Financial Assistance

Four sources of financial assistance can help you through recovery:

- Insurance
- Government disaster programs
- Volunteer organizations
- Businesses

7) Rebuild and Floodproof - To *floodproof* means to remodel or rebuild using materials and methods that will prevent or minimize damage from future floods. Now is the best time to think about floodproofing your home, because you can do many things that will protect your property in the future. Many floodproofing measures are quite simple, cost effective, and easy to put on place. Please refer to the [floodproofing](#) section for more details.

8) Prepare for the Next Flood -

- [Buy Flood Insurance](#)
- Develop a Flood Response Plan
- Help your community implement a flood protection program

Staying Healthy

A flood can cause emotional and physical stress. You need to look after yourself and your family as you focus on cleanup and repair.

- Rest often and eat well.
- Discuss your concerns with others and seek help. Contact Red Cross for information on emotional support available in Wichita or Sedgwick County.

Getting Help

- The American Red Cross can help you by providing you with a voucher to purchase new clothing, groceries, essential medications, bedding, essential furnishings, and other items to meet emergency needs. Listen to the radio to find out where to go for assistance.

American Red Cross Midway-Kansas Chapter
1900 East Douglas
Wichita, Kansas – 67214
(316) 219-4000

- The Red Cross can provide you with a cleanup kit: mop, broom, bucket, and cleaning supplies.
- Contact your insurance agent to discuss claims.
- Listen to your radio for information on assistance that may be provided by the state or federal government or other organizations.
- If you hire cleanup or repair contractors, be sure they are qualified to do the job. Be wary of people who drive through neighborhoods offering help in cleaning up or repairing your home. Always check references.

Source:

Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages. Produced by the National Disaster Education Coalition, Washington, D.C., 1999.

Repairing Your Flooded Home. FEMA 234. August 1992.

<http://www.prepare.org/basic/aftflood.htm>