

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS POINTER

March 2021

What is a flash flood?

A flash flood is a rapid rise in water along a stream or low-lying urban area. It may last a few minutes or a few hours depending on rainfall. This increase in flow poses a threat to life from streams, creeks, rivers, and even storm drains. The flooding can be caused by excessive rainfall, rain on snow events, ice jams breaking up, and/or dam or levee breaches. The weather patterns that cause flash floods tend to change rapidly making them difficult to predict.

What to do if flooding occurs?

The National Weather Service makes the following recommendations:

- Move to higher ground immediately and stay away from flood prone areas.
- Do not allow children to play near high water, storm drains or ditches. Hidden dangers often lie beneath the water.
- Flooded roads can have significant damage hidden by floodwaters. Never drive on a flooded road.
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams or washes especially when threatening weather conditions exist
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.

How severe will the flood be?

Once a waterway reaches flood stage the National Weather Service uses three categories to describe the potential affects of the flood:

- **Minor Flooding** - Minimal or no property damage, but possibly some public threat or inconvenience.
- **Moderate Flooding** - Some inundation of structures and roads near streams. Some evacuations of people and or physical assets to higher elevations are necessary.
- **Major Flooding** - Extensive inundation of structures and roads. Significant evacuations of people and or transfer of physical assets to higher elevations.

Flooding can occur at anytime. Six inches of fast moving water can knock a person off their feet. A two foot depth can float most vehicles including sport utility vehicles. Crossing it is dangerous. Remember, Turn Around, Don't Drown!



Preparedness Steps

1. Have a NOAA Weather Alert Radio at home and as part of your travel equipment. It can alert you to weather, river, and other emergency conditions.
2. Plan more than one evacuation route out of your neighborhood or any outdoor location that you will be visiting. Find the fastest way to high ground that will not force you to cross the flood waters.
3. Have a means of communication with you. A cell phone, CB, or HAM radio could save your life or the lives of those downstream. Immediately alert authorities once you have witnessed a flash flood. Be prepared to give the time and location of the event as exactly as possible.
4. Keep a 72 hour kit in your home and take it with you when you travel. Having three days food and water could save your life if you become isolated by flooding.

