



# Harrisburg NC

## FIRE DEPARTMENT



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## FLOOD FACTS AND SAFETY TIPS

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Flood effects can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states. However, all floods are not alike. Some floods develop slowly, sometimes over a period of days. But flash floods can develop quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water that carries rocks, mud, and other debris and can sweep away most things in its path. Overland flooding occurs outside a defined river or stream, such as when a levee is breached, but still can be destructive. Flooding can also occur when a dam breaks, producing effects similar to flash floods. Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live, but especially if you live in a low-lying area, near water or downstream from a dam. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds, or low-lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood. Every state is at risk from this hazard.

### **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.

### **To prepare for a flood, you should:**

- Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater, and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.



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### **During a Flood**

#### **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, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

#### **If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:**

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

#### **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.
- 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. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away.

### **Driving Flood Facts**

#### **The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions:**

- 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.

### **After a Flood**

#### **The following are guidelines for the period following a flood:**

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them to the power company.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.



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- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.

### **Returning Home**

#### **General Tips:**

Returning home can be both physically and mentally challenging. Above all, use caution. 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.

- Keep a battery-powered radio with you so you can listen for emergency updates and news reports.
- Use a battery-powered flashlight to inspect a damaged home. Note: The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering – the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas if present.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes. Use a stick to poke through debris.
- Be wary of wildlife and other animals.
- Use the phone only to report life-threatening emergencies.
- Stay off the streets. If you must go out, watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.
- **Throw away food that has come in contact with flood waters.** Some canned foods may be salvageable. If the cans are dented or damaged, throw them away. Food contaminated by flood waters can cause severe infections.
- **If water is of questionable purity, boil or add bleach, and distill drinking water before using.** (See information on water treatment under the "**Disaster Supplies Kit**" section.) Wells inundated by flood waters should be pumped out and the water tested for purity before drinking. If in doubt, call your local public health authority. Ill health effects often occur when people drink water contaminated with bacteria and germs.
- **Pump out flooded basements gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.** If the water is pumped completely in a short period of time, pressure from water-saturated soil on the outside could cause basement walls to collapse.
- **Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible.** Damaged sewage systems are health hazards.

### **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.

#### **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.



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### **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.

- Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. 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.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
- Keep kids and people out of flood water, especially moving water!
- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground

#### **Cleaning Up and Repairing Your Home:**

Turn off the electricity at the main breaker or fuse box, even if the power is off in your community. That way, you can decide when your home is dry enough to turn it back on.

#### **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 or look up American Red Cross in the phone book and call.
- 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. Check references...

#### **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.
- Keep a manageable schedule. Make a list and do jobs one at a time.
- Discuss your concerns with others and seek help. Contact Red Cross for information on emotional support available in your area.



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## **Flood Insurance**

### **Consider the following facts:**

- Flood losses are **not covered** under homeowners' insurance policies.
- FEMA manages the National Flood Insurance Program, which makes federally backed flood insurance available in communities that agree to adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood damage.
- Flood insurance is available in most communities through insurance agents.
- There is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance goes into effect, so don't delay.
- Flood insurance is available whether the building is in or out of the identified flood-prone area.