



**American
Red Cross**
of Greater Indianapolis

Flood safety

Floods are the leading weather-related killer nationwide, as well as the most frequent and most costly of all natural disasters. They can occur in any season, fueled by intense rainfall, melting snow, tropical storms and hurricanes, which result in overflowing rivers, retention ponds and drainage systems. The top two causes of flood-related fatalities are attempting to drive through water and playing in or near high water. Just six inches of water can be dangerous. If moving swiftly, it can sweep you off your feet. It can reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling. A foot of water will float many vehicles and just two feet of water can carry away most automobiles. Before flooding begins, take precautions to reduce damage to your property and your risk of injury.



Stages of flood preparedness

Before the flood

- Learn about your area's flood risk. Your local emergency management office or planning and zoning department can help you determine your flood risk.
- If your house or business is in a flood area, make sure flooding is covered by insurance. Most homeowner's insurance policies specifically exclude flooding from rising water, so obtain separate flood insurance and keep your policies and other important papers in a safe-deposit box outside the flood risk area.
- Reduce potential flood damage by raising your furnace, water heater and electric panel if they are in flood-prone areas of your home. Install check valves in building sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home or business.
- Determine several places to meet should floods separate you from other members of your family. Prepare maps for getting there. Store them in your disaster supplies kit.

During a flood

- Listen to local radio and TV stations for instructions on where to go and how soon to leave.
- Move your furniture and valuables to the higher floors of your house.
- Bring outdoor furniture inside and secure other items that might be washed away or injure emergency workers.
- When ordered to evacuate, turn off your electricity, gas and water service (if you are instructed to do so), unplug appliances and lock doors and windows before leaving. Move to your safe location as quickly as possible, or head to a Red Cross shelter. Don't forget your disaster supplies kit.
- If you're in the path of a flash flood, act quickly. You may have only seconds to escape from oncoming water.
- If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.
- Never drive around barricades. They're there for your safety.

After the flood

- Seek medical care for anyone injured. Contaminated water can lead to infection even in minor cuts.
- Beware of secondary damage such as the collapse of water-soaked buildings and walls, injury from debris flows and slides, unsafe roads and mudflows.
- Avoid the disaster area. Don't put yourself in the position of needing to be rescued, and don't hinder rescue and emergency workers.
- Watch out for fire and electrical hazards, and watch for falling objects that may have become dislodged by the flood water.
- When it's safe to return to your home, use extreme caution. Wear sturdy shoes and use flashlights or battery-powered lighting when examining buildings.
- Be on the lookout for secondary damage. Inspect structures carefully for signs of possible collapse. Cracks and damage to a foundation can render a building uninhabitable.
- Take pictures of the damage — to the building and its contents — for insurance claims.
- Throw away food and other perishable materials. Drink only water you are sure is not contaminated.
- Hire qualified repair crews to pump out your basement to avoid structural damage to the foundation.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible to avoid health hazards.

Watches and warnings

A flood **WATCH** means a flood is possible in your area. Fill your vehicle's gas tank in case an evacuation notice is issued.

A flood **WARNING** means flooding already is occurring or will occur soon in your area. Listen to local radio and TV stations for information and advice. If told to evacuate, do so as soon as possible.

A **flash flood WATCH** means flash flooding is possible in your area. Be alert to signs of flash flooding, and be ready to evacuate on a moment's notice.

A **flash flood WARNING** means a flash flood is occurring or will occur very soon. Evacuate immediately.