

Flood Safety Tips

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters. If you live in a flood-prone area, you should know the following:

What to do Before a Flood

- ✓ Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- ✓ Plan for evacuation. Know where you are going and how to get there.
- ✓ Consider purchasing flood insurance if you reside in a flood-prone area.
- ✓ Keep all insurance policies and a list of valuable items in a safe place.
- ✓ Take photos or a videotape of your valuables and keep it in a safe-deposit box.
- ✓ Keep your car filled with gas.



What to do During a Flood

- ✓ Stay away from moving water. Moving water just six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
- ✓ Stay away from downed power lines.
- ✓ If your home is flooded, turn the utilities off until emergency officials tell you it is safe to turn them back on.
- ✓ Do not pump the basement out until floodwaters recede.
- ✓ Avoid weakened floors, walls and rooftops.
- ✓ Wear gloves and wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water if you come in contact with floodwaters.

Do **NOT** try to walk or drive through flooded areas. Water can be deeper than it appears and water levels rise quickly. Depending upon the vehicle, water over twelve inches deep can be dangerous.

What to do After a Flood

- ✓ Avoid weakened floors, walls and rooftops.
- ✓ Wear gloves and wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water if you come in contact with floodwaters.
- ✓ Open all doors and windows. Use fans if possible to air out the building or home.
- ✓ Discard mattresses and stuffed furniture, they cannot adequately be cleaned.
- ✓ Wash dirt and mud from walls, counters and hard surfaced floors with soap and water. Then disinfect by wiping surfaces with a solution of one cup bleach per gallon of water.

A flood **WATCH** means a flood is possible in your area.

A flood **WARNING** means flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area.

Flood Safety Tips

Health and Safety

- ✓ Discard all food that has come in contact with floodwaters. Thoroughly wash all cans of food before opening.
- ✓ If your well is flooded, your tap water is probably unsafe. If you have public water, the health department will let you know—through radio and television—if your water is safe to drink. Until your water is safe, use clean bottled water.

Two Ways to Purify Water

BOILING – Bring water to rolling boil for 3-5 minutes, cool. Boiling is the safest method of purifying water.



DISINFECTION – Use household liquid bleach that contains 5.25% sodium hypo-chlorite (do not use scented or colorsafe bleaches). Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for 30 minutes.



- ✓ Do not use your septic system when water is standing on the ground around it. The ground below will not absorb water from sinks or toilets. When the soil has dried, it is probably safe to use your septic system again. To be sure, contact your local health department.
- ✓ When floodwaters have receded, watch out for weakened road surfaces.



History of Recent Floods in Cowlitz County

	1980 – Flooding & mudflows occurred along the South Fork of the Toutle River and the Cowlitz River. The mudflow destroyed homes, fish, wildlife and vegetation along the Toutle River.
	1986 – In February, heavy rains combined with a warming trend and heavy snowmelt in the mountains created a major flooding event. Two hundred people were evacuated in the Lexington area, 100-120 homes were destroyed or damaged. The County declared a disaster.
	1986 – In November, flooding occurred along many creeks in Cowlitz County. A major storm system with near continuous rainfall saturated the ground, at one point dropping 1.8 inches of rain in 24 hours.
	1990 – In January, and again in February, heavy rains, quick snowmelt and high tides created major flooding conditions. Damages included a washed away home on the Toutle River, a mobile home in West Longview destroyed by a mudslide and several Longview streets flooded with water.
	1995 – In November, extremely heavy rains and high freezing levels caused flood warnings across the County. Evacuations took place in Castle Rock, Kelso and Kalama. The County was declared a disaster by the Governor and also resulted in a Presidential Declaration.
	1996 – Another major storm in February caused widespread damages. Mudslides and water over the road caused numerous roads in the county to be closed, downtown Kalama flooded, Ostrander trailer park was evacuated and inundated with water, I-5 Northbound near Woodland closed due to a rockslide and the dike in Woodland was breached causing major flooding and evacuations in the city. The County received a Presidential Declaration of Emergency.

Links

FEMA: www.fema.gov
 National Weather Service:
<http://www.floodsafety.noaa.gov/>
 National Flood Insurance Program
<http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/index.jsp>