



Are You Prepared for Flood Season?

Is my community in a flood zone?

A number of local events have raised awareness about harsh storms and flooding:








- Recently, a flood scare occurred in New Haven. Frozen ground stopped rainwater from soaking into the ground. With nowhere to go, the rainwater found its way onto roadways, causing drivers to slow to a crawl.
- In Hamden, firefighters answered many floodwater calls and pumped out several basements. Police helped many people who were stranded in cars because of the downpours.



Everyone should be aware of the potential hazards of flooding; however, certain people, such as those who live near the coast, may be at higher risk. You may live in an area that can be easily flooded, but not know about it.

If you would like to learn more about the flooding threat to your community, several organizations may be able to provide you with assistance. The Planning and Zoning Commission, the police or fire department, or local Public Works agency would be a good place to start. If there is a severe storm with flooding, you might be asked to leave your home for a while until it is safe to return. It is important for you and your family to be prepared in case this happens.

What can I do to prepare in advance?

-  Have an emergency plan. Include a disaster kit, evacuation routes, evacuation plan, emergency phone numbers, and a place for your pet to stay if you have to go to a shelter.
-  Have a relative who lives far away be your “family contact” person in case you are separated from your loved ones.
-  Elevate your water heaters, furnaces and appliances such as washers and dryers. These items can be placed on bricks or a treated wood base. Make sure the appliances are at least 12 inches off the above the previous high water mark or the base of flood elevation. Another choice would be to move them to the first or second floor.
-  Electrical panel boxes, circuit breakers, wall switches, and wall outlets should be located 12 inches above flood level. A licensed electrician that is familiar with local codes should be hired to do this work. ***An uninterrupted electrical supply will allow you to move back into the home more quickly after the flood.***
-  Install a septic backflow valve. This can prevent a flooded septic system from backing up into the home. ***Sewage from a septic system is foul smelling and also presents a health risk.*** Backflow valves can be installed inside or outside of the structure but must conform to local building codes.
-  A watertight brick or stone floodwall can be built to enclose furnaces, utilities, and appliances on the lowest floor of your home. Outside, a like wall could be built around the edge of your basement opening to keep water from coming in.
-  Fuel tanks, either inside or outside the home, should be anchored to prevent them from overturning or breaking loose in a flood. Metal straps and bolts should be non-corrosive, and wood structural supports should be pressure treated.

- Stay tuned to local radio or television station for updates
- Secure or store all outdoor possessions
- Have immunization records handy or be aware of your last tetanus shot in case you become injured during or after the flood.
- Sanitize (with bleach), rinse, and fill all bathtubs, sinks, and plastic soda bottles with clean water.
- Gather emergency supplies such as food, water, cooking equipment, first-aid kit, flashlight, portable radio, batteries, cash and credit cards
- If you are able and time permits, move all valuable household items to the upper floors.
- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary



Where else can I turn for help?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides disaster support to individuals, families and businesses in an area whose property is damaged or destroyed and whose losses are not covered by insurance. It is meant to help you with expenses that cannot be covered in other ways. In order to qualify for this program, you must be living in an area that has been declared a disaster by the United States President. To register, call **1-800-FEMA (3362)** or **1-800-462-7585 (TTY)**. Registration can also be done online at www.fema.gov.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency also recommends that homeowners and renters buy flood insurance. The National Flood Insurance Program flood insurance is available through most major private insurance companies and licensed property insurance agents who sell homeowners' or property insurance. If you cannot find a local agent, please contact the National Flood Insurance Program's toll-free information line at **1-888-CALL-FLOOD (427-4661)**, or **800-427-5593 (TTY/TDD)**.

For more information on flood preparedness, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and prevention website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>.

Sources:

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2. Flash flooding affecting roadways. *New Haven Register*. Retrieved March 16, 2007, from http://www.nhregister.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=18028984&BRD=1281&PAG=461&dept_id=566835&rfi=6



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*The purpose of this newsletter is to provide preparedness information to public health professionals.
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