

Be Aware!

Flood Watches and Warnings.

- A **flood watch** is issued when current and developing conditions are such that there is a threat of flooding, but the occurrence is neither certain or imminent.
- A **flood warning** is issued when there is flooding along larger streams causing a serious threat to life or property. A flood warning will usually contain river stage (level) forecasts.
- A **flash flood watch** indicates that flash flooding is possible in and close to the watch area. Those in the affected area are urged to be ready to take quick action if a flash flood warning is issued or flooding is observed.
- A **flash flood warning** signifies a dangerous situation where rapid flooding of small rivers, streams, creeks, or urban areas is imminent or already occurring.

Pay attention to the news.

Local radio and television stations provide up-to-date weather information. Investing in a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio is another way to receive weather and other emergency alerts. In addition, the Iowa Department of Transportation offers real-time information on current road conditions on their website or by calling 5-1-1.

Be Ready Iowa! ✓

www.beready.iowa.gov



Our Mission

To support, coordinate and maintain state and local homeland security and emergency management activities in order to establish sustainable communities and assure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

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Floods & Flash Floods

A Guide for Your Safety



Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management Division

Floods are one of the most common hazards of the U.S. You should 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 small streams, creeks, dry streambeds or low-lying ground that appear harmless in dry weather can flood.

1 BEFORE a Flood...

- Find out if you live in a flood-prone area, and stockpile emergency building materials if you do.
- Learn flood warning signs and your community alert signals.
- Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains.
- Plan and practice an evacuation route. Contact the local emergency management office or local Red Cross chapter for a copy of the community flood evacuation plan.
- Have disaster supplies on hand.
- Develop a family emergency communication plan.
- Make sure that all family members know how to respond after a flood or flash flood. Teach all family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water.
- Learn about the National Flood Insurance Program. Ask your insurance agent about flood insurance. Homeowners policies generally do not cover flood damage.
- Catalog your belongings. Take photos of rooms, furniture, books, appliances, computer equipment, DVDs, and other items of value. Keep your catalog or "inventory list" in a safe place.



2 DURING a Flood...

If Indoors

- Turn on a battery-operated radio or TV to get the latest emergency information.
- Get your pre-assembled emergency supplies.

If Outdoors

- Climb to high ground and stay there.
- Avoid walking through flood waters. Even six inches of swiftly-moving water can sweep you off your feet.

If in a Car

- If you come to a flooded area, turn around and go another way. Turn around—don't drown!
- If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled vehicles.



During an Evacuation

- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Evacuation is simpler and safer before flood waters become too deep to drive through.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for evacuation instructions.
- Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by flood waters.

3 AFTER a Flood...

- Do not return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.
- Inspect foundations for damage.
- Stay out of buildings if flood waters remain around the building.
- When entering buildings, use caution.
 - Wear sturdy shoes and use battery-powered flashlights.
 - Examine walls, floors, doors and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.
 - Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes, that may have come in with flood waters. Use a stick to poke through debris.
 - Take photos of damage to the house and its contents for insurance claims.
- Throw away food—including canned goods—that has come into contact with flood waters.
- Pump out flooded basements **gradually** (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible as they are health hazards.



Inspecting Utilities in a Damaged Home

- **Check for gas leaks.** If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from outside the home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
- **Look for electrical system damage.** If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to do so, call an electrician for advice.
- **Check for sewage and water line damage.** If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.