



Floods are one of the most common, and most costly, natural disasters. Preparing now for flood situations can minimize injury to yourself and your family and speed the recovery process.

Before a Flood

- **Be prepared for the possible disruption of services for extended periods of time, including electric, phone and local food and water sources.**
- **Prepare an emergency kit:**
 - Food, water and necessities for all members of the family to last 3 to 5 days
 - Any medications needed for family members
 - First aid kit, battery powered radio, flashlight with extra batteries
 - Sleeping bags or blankets, and extra clothing
 - Important family documents (e.g., insurance policies, emergency contact numbers)
 - Water-purifying supplies (e.g., chlorine tablets, or unscented, household chlorine bleach)
- **Family communication and evacuation plan.**
 - Know how you will contact each other if you are in separate locations or establish a location to meet.
 - Have an out-of-state relative or friend serve as the family contact person.
 - Learn the evacuation routes and locations of emergency shelters in your area.

During a Flood

- **Gather your emergency supplies.**
- **Stay informed.**
 - Listen to the radio or television for situation developments, evacuation instructions and routes, and road closures.
- **Never ignore an evacuation order for the safety of you and your family.**
- **If you have time,**
 - Disconnect electrical appliances to prevent electrical shock when power is restored.
 - Turn off the gas, electricity and water as the main switches or valves.
 - Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- **Follow evacuation routes; expect heavy traffic.**
- **Avoid floodwaters.**
 - Water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage, harmful bacteria or electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.

- **Do not walk through moving water.**
 - If water is above your ankles, turn around and go another way; as little as 6 inches of water can sweep you off your feet.
- **Do not drive in flooded areas.**
 - Most flood-associated deaths are related to vehicle incidents.
 - As little as six inches of water will cause loss of control and possible stalling. A foot of water will float most vehicles. Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles.
 - If flood waters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground.

After a Flood

- **Only return home after officials have declared the area safe.**
- **Cleanup safely.**
 - Wear protective clothing, (rubber gloves, boots).
 - Do not use water that could be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, or make ice.
 - Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated.
 - Be aware of hazards that may cause injury to you or others cleaning up, (e.g., chain saws, pressure washers, electrical or chemical hazards, heat exposure).
- **Prevent and treat injuries.**
 - Exposure to floodwaters in cold weather can lead to hypothermia.
 - Extreme heat can lead to heat stress or exhaustion.
 - Take precautions to minimize insect exposures.
- **Prevent illness.**
 - Wash hand frequently – especially after contacting flood water or contaminated items.
 - Use clean, boiled or disinfected water; if no water is available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used.
- **Food and water safety.**
 - Throw away any food that may have come in contact with flood water.
 - Throw away perishable foods that have been unrefrigerated for 2 or more hours.
 - When in doubt, throw it out!
- **Use safe water (e.g., bottled, boiled or treated) for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene.**
 - Wells may be contaminated following floods.
 - Boil or treat water for drinking and cooking until authorities tell you that your water supply is safe.

Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010.