

FLOOD PREPARATION AND PLANNING

STEPS TO PREPARE FOR A FLOOD

Flooding can occur during any season in Michigan. Planning in advance can afford you extra critical time when a flood is coming, and can help you increase the odds of protecting your valuable documents, your real estate and your personal property – including cherished belongings. Developing a flood plan is one of the advance methods your family, business or community can put together to help you respond quickly in the event of a flood near your property. A “rapid-response” plan can be as simple as a one-page plan that answers the following questions:

1. How will we find out about a coming flood?

The first part of a Flood Plan is putting yourself in a position to get some advance warning of an unfolding situation. Large-scale flooding on the main stem of a river may occur over many hours or several days, but flash floods can strike in minutes. Important steps you can take include signing up for flood alerts and monitoring weather patterns and local conditions. Flooding in Michigan can happen any time of year.

- Sign up for NOAA National Weather Service Flood Alerts at www.focusonfloods.org/flood-alerts
- Monitor river levels from NOAA National Weather Service at www.water.weather.gov/ahps/region.php?state=mi.
- Determine your property’s proximity to waterways by learning about and reviewing flood hazard maps at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/flooding_flood_risks/understanding_flood_maps.jsp.

2. At what river level does our property begin to flood?

First, determine “What’s Your Number?” by learning the flood stage at the stream gage nearest you. This information is available through the National Weather Service’s Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services website at www.water.weather.gov/ahps. Then, determine the level at which floodwaters begin to affect your property. This step may take research or personal experience to determine, such as talking to neighbors to find out how high the river was during recent floods, and at what point flooding began in your neighborhood. Each neighborhood and each property has its own unique terrain and placement to consider when determining this factor, and it is safest to err on the side of caution.

3. How can we prepare for floods?

Preparing your household for a flood involves steps that will improve your readiness for many different types of disasters. Give yourself plenty of time to evacuate by developing an emergency kit including first aid supplies, a three-day supply of non-perishable food, bottled water, a battery-powered radio, flashlights and extra batteries. Also, have personal items ready like rubber boots, a rain jacket, warm clothes, and hygiene and sanitation products. Learn additional ways to prepare at www.ready.gov/floods.

4. How will we learn about evacuation orders?

Contact your local emergency management office to find out how your community notifies residents of floods and how it will issue evacuation orders. Make a commitment to follow evacuation orders the first time to help prevent emergency personnel from having to return to the affected area for a rescue when travel is no longer safe.

5. What access roads can we use to evacuate in the case of rising waters?

Research indicates the majority of flood-related fatalities occur when cars become trapped on roads that are known to flood. To prevent this, follow instructions from emergency personnel and before a flood happens talk to neighbors, emergency personnel and others to determine when and where flooding typically occurs on access roads leading to your home. Know what roads you regularly travel and whether they will flood, and plan alternate routes when needed.

6. What steps should we take to prepare our property?

Research the flood-proofing options available to you. Can you install a quick-disconnect furnace, or elevate electrical and mechanical equipment? Are there steps you can take to alleviate pressure on your structure and to prevent extensive damage to doors and windows if flooding does occur? For additional information about protecting your property from floods, please visit www.mcswa.com.

7. Where should our family meet if we are separated during a flood event?

Before a flood or other emergency strikes, designate a safe place away from your home where your family members can all meet. Make sure that all family members know the location, you have a plan for contacting each other, and you have an emergency kit ready to take with you. In addition, it is important to know whether your child's school or family members' work place is in a flood zone. If so, what provisions are in place to ensure their safety?

8. How do I keep my family safe during a flood?

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters. For information on keeping your family safe before, during, and after a flood, please visit: www.mcswa.com.

Other Considerations

- A written plan is essential for helping individuals and household members to think through important issues in advance. You should also research whether there are similar plans in place for your place of work and your children's daycare and school and see how they work with your plan.
- Expect roadways to be blocked during a flood. Contact your friends and family to ensure they are safely sheltered. Listen to local media for flooding on roads as well as making contact with neighbors in your area.
- Remember, some of the most common things people regret not planning to protect during an emergency include pets, photographs and computers. Can you pack all these in a vehicle and drive to higher ground in time? Ensure you have a plan in place to protect your pets and keepsakes before an emergency.

Helpful Flood Terms

- Flood Watch: Flooding is possible. Tune in to your NOAA Weather Radio, local radio or television for information and check the flood alert sites on the Internet.
- Flash Flood Watch: Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground and tune in to your NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for information.
- Flood Warning: Flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Flash Flood Warning: A flash flood is occurring. Seek higher ground immediately.