



Floods and Flash Floods

What is a flood? What is a flash flood?

A flood is a rising and overflowing body of water. A flash flood is a great amount of water that develops in a very short amount of time generally resulting from heavy rainfall in the immediate area. Floods and flash floods can be very dangerous. Some floods develop slowly over several days. Flash floods can develop quickly and can be accompanied by a wall of water that carries rocks, mud and other debris. This water can sweep away just about anything in its path. Floods can occur anywhere but are more likely to occur in low-lying areas or near water.

Why are floods and flash floods dangerous?

Moving water can cause you to fall. Cars can lose control or stall. Electrical shock or drowning is possible. Standing water and mud can contain sewage and chemicals causing sickness in humans and animals. Debris in flood waters can cause injury or death to humans and animals and damage to property. Building and home foundations and roads can be damaged causing weakened floors or surfaces that could collapse.

Know your terms!

Flood Watch means flooding is possible. Stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio and local media for more information.

Flash Flood Watch means flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground. Stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio and local media for more information.

Flood Warning means flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If told to leave your home or business, do so immediately.

Flash Flood Warning means a flash flood is occurring. Seek higher ground immediately.

Protective measures for people and animals:

- Before a flood, prepare a disaster supply kit. See below for a list of disaster kit items. Other tips include: elevate and reinforce your home if you're in a floodplain; elevate furnace, water heater and electric panel if needed; install "check valves" in sewer traps; construct barriers to stop floodwater from entering your home or business; seal walls in basements with a waterproofing compound; move in outdoor furniture; move essential items to an upper floor; turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so; disconnect electrical appliances-do not touch electrical appliances if wet or standing in water; have a safety plan for your animals and pets. Know if you are in an area close to streams, drainage channels or other sources of water that could flood.
- During a flood, stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio and local media for information. If there's any danger of flash flooding in your area, move immediately to higher ground-and then monitor the local news for further instructions. If you have pets, take your pet with you.

- **Evacuation tips:** do not walk or drive through flooded areas or moving water greater than six inches in depth. If you must walk through water, do so where water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground before you step. If floodwaters surround your car, leave it and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. Six inches of water can cause most vehicles to stall and a driver to lose control of the vehicle. A foot of water can float many vehicles. Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles and trucks.

Disaster Supply Kit:

- Water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days).
- Non-perishable foods and any special dietary products (enough for at least three days).
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries.
- First aid kit and manual.
- Small tool kit and non-electric can opener.
- Essential (most needed) medicines.
- Cash and credit cards.
- An extra change of clothes and sturdy shoes.
- Personal hygiene supplies.

Safety after the flood:

- Stay tuned to radio or television for emergency updates.
- Before drinking water, make sure it's safe.
- Avoid floodwaters. Water may be contaminated or electrically charged if power lines are down.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware that roads may be weakened in previously flooded areas.
- Do not explore flooded creeks or riverbeds. Flood waters weaken the banks and they can easily give way. You or your children could be pulled into the rushing waters.
- Report downed power lines and stay away from them.
- Do not enter any building or even your home if these structures are surrounded by floodwaters. Once floodwaters have receded, enter only when authorities say it is safe.
- Do not enter if you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing sound. Call the gas company immediately.
- Have septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems serviced as soon as possible.
- Clean and disinfect everything that was exposed to flood waters.
- Report any damage to your insurance agent.
- Dispose of questionable food.
- Inform local authorities of any health and safety issues in your area.
- When cleaning, pace yourself. Don't overdo it. Drink enough water, eat well, rest, wear gloves, but still wash hands thoroughly with soap and water often. Wear sturdy boots and gloves.

For more information, call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or visit our website at www.guilfordcountync.gov or visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov

Free language assistance is available upon request.