

# Ten things to get you prepared for any flood

*Storm surge flooding claims lives every year in our country, and few things will cause so much destruction and distress as flooding. Those that have experienced a flash flood will tell you that it's a surreal experience, and there's nothing you can do to stop the rise of floodwaters, and there's no stopping its march forward.*

The bad thing about floods is that they can occur everywhere, and it doesn't matter if you live in the deserts of the Southwest or are located in the Midwest. We all need to know what to do to prepare for floods, regardless if it's a flash flood we're dealing with or a spring flooding.

## Types of flooding

As we said, no area is exempted from the dangers of rising waters, and you should be aware of the different types of flooding.

- The most common type of flooding people all over the world are experiencing is **overbank flooding**. This type of flooding occurs in areas located around rivers or streams, and they take place when those watercourses exceed their capacity due to heavy rainfall or melting snow. Once the waters leave the confines of the riverbank, they will slowly expand and spread to low-lying areas.
- **Flash floods** are quite common in dry areas, and they develop at an incredible speed. For example, the scorched ground in Arizona creates fast-moving waterways for the rains falling in the mountains and valleys. The soil cannot absorb a large quantity of water in a short

amount of time, and it creates a highway for moving waters. Flash floods carry all sorts of debris that accumulate in dry stream beds, which makes them extremely dangerous.

- In other parts of the country, where cold temperature freezes water creating significant ice, certain folks will experience what's called **ice dam flooding**. This is because substantial rainfall in such areas will begin to push ice in all directions and form a natural dam. And if that dam breaks apart, all the water trapped behind it will rush into the surrounding area. The main issue here is that such floods carry large chunks of ice, and they will destroy everything in their path (roads, homes, vehicles, etc.).
- Those living in coastal areas will eventually learn to fear the dangers of **coastal flooding**. Compared to other types of flooding, coastal area flooding is usually connected with storms and other weather events such as hurricanes and tornadoes. A storm surge can reach as high as 25 feet, and strong waves will create severe problems for those living in coastal areas. Storm surge flooding claims more lives than any other weather event hitting a coastal region.

## Preparing for floods

If you live in an area prone to flooding, you should do whatever you can to prepare for such natural disasters. Here are some tips that we hope will help you face the rising waters:

1. **Build an emergency kit** that will contain all the needed essentials to survive for a few days. The kit will include water, non-perishable foods, one or two flashlights, extra batteries for the flashlights and other gadgets, a hand-cranked radio, a cell phone

charger (preferably a solar one), a first aid kit, sanitation items, a multi-tool, clothes, important documents, and pet supplies if you have pets. Additionally, each kit should contain the essential items needed for survival (food, water, shelter, first-aid, communication), and it should be designed based on the needs of your family members. Perhaps you have an infant that needs various supplies, or maybe an elderly relative lives with you, and you may need to carry them and take care of their needs (food, medicine, etc.).

2. **Create an emergency plan for your entire family.** The chances are that not everyone will be at home when the waters begin to rise, and it's better to have a designated meeting point in case an evacuation order is issued.
3. **Pick one or more locations that will be safe from flooding** and make sure everyone knows how to reach these locations. Even more, you should be able to get in touch with them at all times, so think of what communication means you will be using. You will need to guide them and pick them up in case you evacuate using your vehicle. The changing weather can drastically influence the development of a flood. Areas that you thought will be safe may no longer be suitable to accommodate people running from the rising waters.
4. **Make sure that your vehicle is prepared to handle the task.** A minimum knowledge of vehicle maintenance is required. It doesn't matter if the evacuation plan is triggered by a flash flood or other natural disasters. You need to be able to fix every issue that may stop your car from working. You need to have a full tank of gas and a gas canister in the trunk, and you need to have all the supplies inside your car organized based on their scope and use. Think of it like this, if your vehicle gets stuck and you need to carry away some supplies, you need to find those supplies immediately. You won't have the time to rummage through all the boxes

and bags. Also, if you plan to drive through the water, you should learn about aquaplaning and how it can put you and yours in danger.

5. **Figure out ways how to move all your stuff on higher ground.** Long before the flood hits your area, you should take the time and install all the items that need protection on elevated platforms. For example, your water heater, furnace, generator, and pretty much anything that keeps your home running should be installed on elevated platforms to protect them better. Also, organize all your valuable stuff in waterproof boxes or crates that would be easy to carry upstairs if you are forced to do so.
6. **Everything needs to be tied down and adequately secured.** Some folks will secure and seal their underground tanks and cisterns, while others will bring everything of value inside their home and store their stuff in the attic. Some people use heavy-duty plastic bags to protect their clothes and everything that might get wet. Place various items in such bags, tie the mouth of the bags using zip ties or make a knot and your stuff won't get wet. However, make sure you store all the packaged stuff in an enclosed space so that your property won't float away when the waters rise.
7. **Learn about your area and the dangers you will have to face in case of flooding.** To better understand what you'll be subjected to, check the flood hazards map for your areas. These should be available on the [fema.gov](https://www.fema.gov) website. These records will help you figure out the actual threat in your area, the evacuation routes, and how to follow them. Even more, please talk with your neighbors and learn from their experiences. Those that lived through flash floods will be able to tell you what protection measures worked and what didn't. Even more, they will be able to share valuable information about the cleaning process that followed once the waters started to recede.

8. **Installing a sump pump with backup power becomes mandatory if, historically, your area is prone to flooding.** However, the intelligent thing would be to install two sump pumps in line with a breaker between them to have a backup solution. A single sump pump will often fail to do its job or just get fried during continuous work. Having a second pump will save you a lot of headaches. Without a sump pump or two, you will not be able to clean your house, and getting rid of all that water will be tedious work.
9. **Assess your home and establish how well insulated it is.** This will help you figure out what areas you need to sandbag (most probably the doorways and windows), and you will also understand what part of your house will be sacrificed to the rising waters. For example, if you have basement windows, you will need to board them up to prevent the glass from breaking, and you will also need to sandbag them. Even so, chances are the basement will still get flooded, so in addition to installing every indispensable item on elevated platforms, you will have to move everything out. This can be serious work, mainly since some preppers use this space for food and gear storing purposes. Assessing your home will also help you figure out the dead spots in your home where you risk getting trapped once the waters start to rise. Usually, the deadliest place in your home is the attic since most attics don't have a window that would allow the homeowner to get out on the roof safely. Many people drown in their attic, trying to escape the rising waters by taking refuge there. A simple act like storing a hatchet or an ax in your attic will prevent this from happening.
10. **Don't walk through floodwaters.** This is a serious health hazard since you can never know what may lay beneath the water surface. Muddy waters can hide downed power lines, all sorts of sharp objects that can cause serious wounds, or there can be chemicals mixed in the water

that will cause skin burns or contaminate your body. Even more, folks should understand that a depth of only 6 inches can be more than enough to make you lose your balance. You can imagine how difficult it will be for the elderly to evacuate during flash floods. And to make things worse, the ground under the flow may get soft enough to make you sink and become trapped in rising waters.

## **Protecting your pets or homestead animals**

One major thing you have to consider is how to protect your pets and homestead animals if your property is prone to flooding. Your pets should be easier to handle (in theory) compared to other homestead animals. This, of course, if they don't hide and you're unaware about their whereabouts. Learning how your pets act during times of distress and where they like to hide will help you figure out how to retrieve them safely and how to transport them without putting them and yourself in danger. Protecting your homestead animals is a more complicated issue. While some may decide to move their chickens, rabbits, and goats in their two-story, gable-roofed barn, others will make various arrangements to make sure their animals have a fighting chance. Some folks will evacuate with their horses, while others will open the pens and let the livestock fend for themselves. It's all a matter of where your homestead is located, how you planned its layout, and how severe flooding can get in your area. Sometimes you won't be able to save all your animals no matter how hard you try, and you need to understand that you shouldn't put yourself at risk trying in vain.

# The cleanup process

Sooner or later, the waters will recede, and you have to think about the cleanup process. There will be many tasks you need to take care of (shoveling mud, cutting and removing debris, cutting downed trees, etc.), and you won't be able to handle such tasks without having the proper tools.

- Store all the tools you think you may need someplace where the raising waters can't reach them, and think about having a spare of each instrument.
- You may need a helping hand to clean your home and its surroundings, and you will have to rely on your neighbors to help you out. In a more fortunate case, maybe you will be the one to provide help to your neighbors, so make sure you can do so.
- Keep in mind that there will be some sanitation tasks you need to take care of, and having a water filtering system becomes mandatory after a flood.
- Potable water will be in high demand since it will be used for drinking, cooking, bathing, and other sanitation tasks, and chances are there won't be enough of it to go around. Even more, your animals will also need water, and you need to make sure you can procure potable water or have the means to filter and sterilize water from various sources (ponds, wells, lakes, etc.).
- And last but not least, learn how to dispose of dead animals properly if you live on a homestead where animals didn't make it. This is a severe scenario to consider, and you need to dispose of animal carcasses efficiently before they become a health hazard. Burying the dead animals will be out of the question since the soil will be waterlogged, and you risk contaminating the entire area once the animals start to decompose. Your best option would be to burn the carcasses, but doing so requires fuel to maintain a long burn, and you need to

set up a designated area where the burning will occur.

## **Concluding**

Flooding can often become a destructive natural disaster that can damage your home to the point of no repair in a matter of minutes. Flooding waters will fill every space and will bring mud and destruction to what was once happy home. By learning how to better prepare for floods, you will be able to protect your home and your loved ones from the destructive flow of floods.