



## Winter Weather: Flooding

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### EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

- To report flooding on roads in Marin County, call (415) 499-7539.
- To report flooding at a pump station in Marin County, call (415) 499-6576.
- To report flooding after 5:00 pm or on weekends, call (415) 499-7237.
- To find out whether your property is above or below the flood stage water level and learn about the history of flooding for your region, call your city or town Planning Department or the Marin County Community Development Agency if you live in an unincorporated area. call the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (415)485-3363 for a copy of their erosion control brochures.

### WHAT IS A FLOOD?

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters--except fire. Most communities in the United States can experience some kind of flooding during and after winter storms, and heavy thunderstorms. Floods can be slow, or fast rising but generally develop over a period of days. Winter storms in California can be deadly, causing flooding, flash floods, high coastal surf, and mudslides.

### EMERGENCY INFORMATION

1. Flood waters can be extremely dangerous. The force of six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet.
2. Roads may be closed because they have been damaged or are covered with water. Barricades are placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
3. Flash flood waters move at very fast speeds and can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings, and obliterate bridges. Walls of water can reach heights of 10 to 20 feet and generally are accompanied by a deadly cargo of debris.
4. Cars can easily be swept away in just 2 feet of moving water. If a car stalls in flood water or flood waters rise around a car, it should be abandoned.
5. If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded, stay on firm ground. Flooding may have caused familiar places to change by eroding roads or walkways. It can hide debris and be very slippery.
6. Keep listening to the radio for news about what to do, where to go or places to avoid. Keep a battery operated radio at home. The all-news station in the San Francisco Bay Area is KCBS, 740-AM.
7. Simple weather radios (that broadcast only weather service reports) can be purchased for less than \$25.

### NFIP - FLOOD INSURANCE

- Individuals and business owners can protect themselves from flood losses by purchasing flood insurance through [National Flood Insurance Program](#). Homeowner's policies do not cover flood damage. Information is available through local insurance agents.
- FEMA Director James L. Witt is encouraging the public to protect themselves during the upcoming El Niño season by purchasing flood insurance. Contact any licensed insurance agent.
- Flooding has caused the deaths of more than 10,000 people since 1900. Property damage from flooding now totals over \$1 billion each year in the United States.
- Nearly 9 of every 10 presidential disaster declarations result from natural phenomena in which flooding was a major component.

### MITIGATION PAYS OFF IN THE LONG RUN

Mitigation includes any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or lessen the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. Investing in mitigation steps **now** such as constructing barriers and purchasing flood insurance will help reduce the amount of structural damage to your home and financial loss should a flood or flash flood occur.

## **PREPARE FOR FLOODING**

### **Find out if you live in a flood-prone area**

- Find out whether your property is above or below the flood stage water level and learn about the history of flooding for your region. Talk to your city or town Planning Department or the Marin County [Community Development Agency](#) if you live in an unincorporated area.

### **If you live in a frequently flooded area (or even if you don't):**

- Stockpile emergency building materials, including plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber, nails, hammer and saw, pry bars and shovels.
- If your property can be protected by sandbags, consider purchasing sand and bags BEFORE the rainy season and stockpile as many filled bags as you think you may need. Check out the [Sandbag](#) link to find out where to get sandbags in Marin County, and how to fill and stack them.
- Inspect your Property for any signs of erosion. Rain has a way of making small problems become BIG problems. Call the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (at 485-3363) for a copy of their erosion control brochures "Tips for the Weekend Warriors" and "Repairing Streambank Erosion."
- Rake up and bag leaves as often as possible and ESPECIALLY before storms. Leaves clog up the storm drain inlets and are the primary source of most flood occurrences.
- Clean all drains around your home, including roof gutters and downspouts, drain inlets and pipes, drainage ditches and driveway culverts.
- Check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains.

### **Plan and practice evacuation routes.**

- This plan should include information on the safest routes to shelters. Individuals living in flash flood areas should have several alternative routes.
- Keep your car fueled; if electric power fails, filling stations may not be able to operate.

### **Have personal comfort disaster supplies on hand at home and at work**

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Emergency food (consider special diets) and water
- Nonelectric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards (if electric power fails, so do the ATM's)
- Sturdy shoes
- Warm clothing or blankets

### **Develop an emergency communication plan.**

- Family members may become separated from one another during floods. Have a plan for getting back together.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police, fire department, and which radio station to tune to for emergency information.

### **For more information contact:**

Marin County sheriff's Office of Emergency Services  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 266  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
415/ 499-6584