



Office of Health Emergency Management

The Facts on FLOODS

Natural disasters are a part of life. In New Mexico, the threat of seasonal wildfires and flooding is a concern for all citizens statewide. The Office of Health Emergency Management (OHEM) has prepared fact sheets to help you understand the different types of natural disasters and their potential effect on you and your family.

How To Prepare Before a Storm or Flood Hit Your Area

- Contact the local county geologist or county planning department to find out if your home is located in a flash-flood-prone area or landslide-prone area.
- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be the "family contact" in case your family is separated during a flood. Make sure everyone in your family knows the name, address, and phone number of this contact person.
- Post emergency phone numbers at every phone.

- Inform local authorities about any special needs, such as the elderly or bed-ridden people, or anyone with a disability.
- Identify potential home hazards and know how to secure or protect them before the flood strikes. Be prepared to turn off electrical power when there is standing water, fallen power lines, or before you evacuate. Turn off gas and water supplies before you evacuate. Secure structurally unstable building materials.
- Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where it is and how to use it.
- Buy and install sump pumps with back-up power.
- Have a licensed electrician raise electric components (switches, sockets, circuit breakers and wiring) at least 12" above your home's projected flood elevation.
- For drains, toilets, and other sewer connections, install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters from entering.
- Anchor fuel tanks which can contaminate your

basement if torn free. An unanchored tank outside can be swept downstream and damage other houses.

How To Prepare If You Are Under Flood Watch or Warning

- Gather the emergency supplies you previously stocked in your home and stay tuned to local radio or television station for updates.
- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary.
- Have your immunization records handy or be aware of your last tetanus shot, in case you should receive a puncture wound or a wound becomes contaminated during or after the flood.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with clean water. Sanitize the sinks and tubs first by using bleach. Rinse and fill with clean water.
- Bring outdoor possessions, such as lawn furniture, grills and trash cans inside or tie them down securely.

Supplies You Will Need During The Flood Emergency

You should stock your home with supplies that may be needed during the emergency period. At a minimum, these supplies should include:

- Several clean containers for water, large enough for a 3-5 day supply of water (about five gallons for each person).
- A 3-5 day supply of non-perishable food and a non-electric can opener.
- A first aid kit and manual and prescription medicines and special medical needs.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries.
- Sleeping bags or extra blankets.
- Water-purifying supplies, such as chlorine or iodine tablets or unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach.
- Baby food and/or prepared formula, diapers, and other baby supplies.
- Disposable cleaning cloths, such as "baby wipes" for the whole family to use in case bathing facilities are not available.
- Personal hygiene supplies, such as soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, etc.
- An emergency kit for your car with food, flares, booster cables, maps, tools, a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, sleeping bags, etc.
- Rubber boots, sturdy shoes, and waterproof gloves.
- Insect repellent containing DEET, screens, or long-sleeved and long-legged

clothing for protection from mosquitoes which may gather in pooled water remaining after the flood.

What To Do If You Must Prepare to Evacuate

Expect the need to evacuate and prepare for it. When a flood watch is issued, you should:

- Fill your vehicle's gas tank and make sure the emergency kit for your car is ready.
- If no vehicle is available, make arrangements with friends or family for transportation.
- Fill your clean water containers.
- Review your emergency plans and supplies, checking to see if any items are missing.
- Tune in the radio or television for weather updates.
- Listen for disaster sirens and warning signals.
- Put livestock and family pets in a safe area. Due to food and sanitation requirements, emergency shelters cannot accept animals.
- Adjust the thermostat on refrigerators and freezers to the coolest possible temperature.

What To Do If You Are Ordered To Evacuate

You should never ignore an evacuation order. Authorities will direct you to leave if you are in a low-lying area, or within the greatest potential path of the rising waters. If a flood warning is issued for your area or you are directed by authorities to evacuate

the area:

Take only essential items with you. If you have time, turn off the gas, electricity, and water. Disconnect appliances to prevent electrical shock when power is restored. Follow the designated evacuation routes and expect heavy traffic. Do not attempt to drive or walk across creeks or flooded roads.

If You Are Ordered NOT to Evacuate

To get through the storm in the safest possible manner:

- Monitor the radio or television for weather updates
- Prepare to evacuate to a shelter or to a neighbor's home if your own home is damaged or if you are instructed to do so by emergency management personnel.

The most important things to do and remember are to:

REMAIN CALM AND STAY INFORMED.

For more information on emergency health preparedness, contact the Office of Health Emergency Management (OHEM) at 505/476-7701 or visit our website at www.health.state.nm.us/ohem