Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Environmental Health Media Toolkits

Dangers of Flooding and Tips for How You Can Protect Yourself

Learn how to stay safe during and after a flood.

Did you know that the initial damage caused by a flood should not be your only concern? Standing flood waters can also spread infectious diseases, contain chemical hazards, and cause injuries. Each year, flooding causes more deaths than any other hazard related to thunderstorms. The most common flood deaths occur when a vehicle is driven into hazardous flood waters. Fortunately, you can take steps to protect yourself, your family, and your home.

During a Flood Watch or Warning

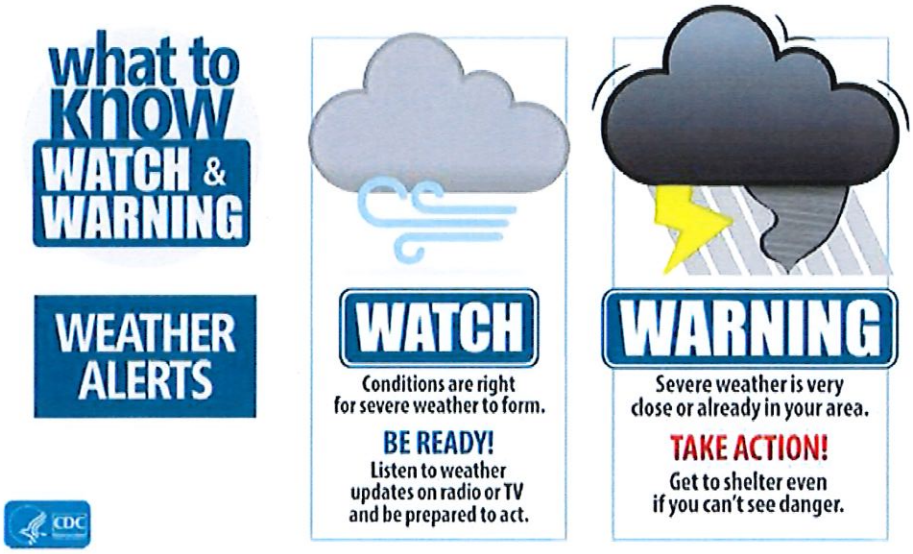
- Gather emergency supplies.
- Listen to your local radio or television station for updates.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks, gallon jars, or plastic soda bottles so that you will have a supply of clean water.
  - Sanitize sinks/tubs first by cleaning them using diluted household laundry bleach. Then rinse and fill with clean water.
- Bring in outdoor possessions (lawn furniture, grills, trash cans) or tie them down securely.
- If you need to evacuate, turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve.
- Evacuate areas that are subject to flooding: low spots, canyons, washes, etc.
- Make sure your immunization records are handy and stored in a waterproof container.

After Flooding Has Occurred

- Do not drink flood water, or use it to wash dishes, brush teeth, or wash/prepare food. Drink clean, safe water.
- If you evacuated: return to your home only after local authorities have said it is safe to do so.
- Listen to water advisories from local authorities to find out if your water is safe for drinking and bathing.
  - During a water advisory, use only bottled, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking, etc.
- Avoid driving through flooded areas and standing water. As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

Contact Information

NCEH/ATSDR Office of Communication
(770) 488-0700
envhealthmedia@cdc.gov



Learn the difference between a watch and warning
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Floods Homepage

Preparing for a Flood

After a Flood

Evacuate or Stay at Home

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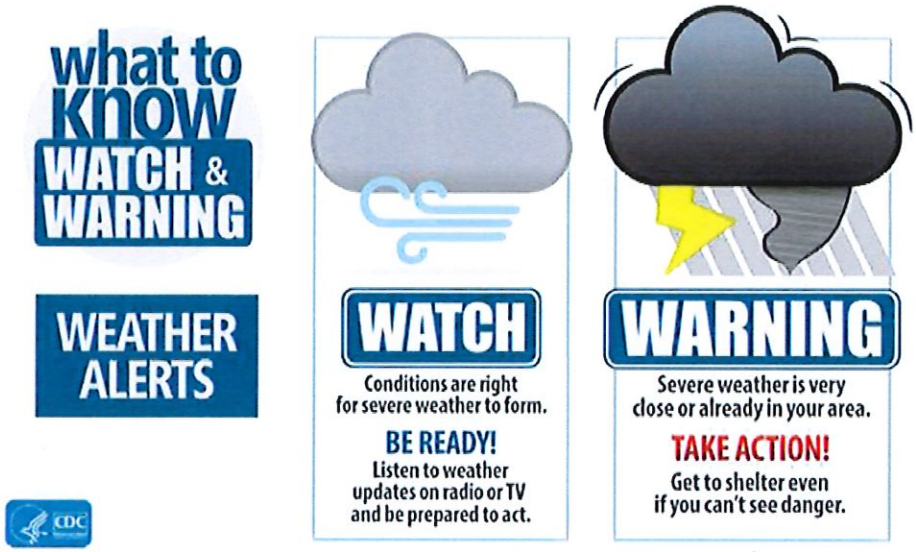
- Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Use generators and pressure washers outside, at least 20 feet from any doors, windows and vents.

After you return home, if you find that your home was flooded, practice safe cleaning.

- When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away any food and bottled water that comes/may have come in contact with flood water or that was not refrigerated for more than two hours.
- Remove and throw out drywall and insulation that was contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- Do not use items that cannot be washed and cleaned with bleach: mattresses, pillows, carpeting, carpet padding, and stuffed toys.
- Use diluted household laundry bleach to clean dirt and mold off of items like floors, stoves, sinks, countertops, plates, and tools.
- Dilute bleach to the proper concentration according to these charts.

Homeowners may want to temporarily store items outside of the home until insurance claims can be filed. See recommendations by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) .

Get more information about staying safe during a flood.



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HOW TO STAY SAFE

WHEN A FLOOD THREATENS

Know your area's type of flood risk. Visit FEMA's Flood Map Service Center at https://msc.fema.gov/portal for information.

Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.

If flash flooding is a risk in your location, monitor potential signs such as heavy rain.

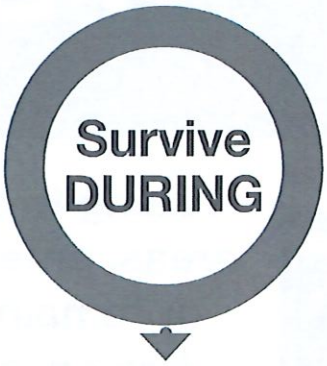
Learn and practice evacuation routes, shelter plans, and flash flood response.

Gather supplies in case you have to leave immediately or if services are cut off. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Don't forget the needs of pets. Obtain extra batteries and charging devices for phones and other critical equipment.

Obtain flood insurance. Homeowner's policies do not cover flooding. Get flood coverage under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Keep important documents in a waterproof container. Create password-protected digital copies.

Protect your property. Move valued items to higher levels. Declutter drains and gutters. Install check valves. Consider a sump pump with a battery.



Depending on where you are, and the impact and the warning time of flooding, go to the safe location that you have identified.

If told to evacuate, do so immediately. Never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of flooded areas.

Listen to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio, or local alerting systems for current emergency information and instructions.

Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. Turn Around. Don't Drown.® Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

Stay off of bridges over fast-moving water. Fast-moving water can wash bridges away without warning.

If your vehicle is trapped in rapidly moving water, stay inside. If water is rising inside the vehicle, seek refuge on the roof.

If trapped in a building, go to its highest level. Do not climb into a closed attic. You may become trapped by rising floodwater. Go on the roof only if necessary. Signal for help.

FEMA

FEMA V-1005
Catalog No. 17233-6

Listen to authorities for information and instructions.

Avoid driving, except in emergencies.

Be aware that snakes and other animals may be in your house. Wear heavy gloves and boots during clean up.

Avoid wading in floodwater, which can contain dangerous debris and be contaminated. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.

Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machinery ONLY outdoors and away from windows.

Be aware of the risk of electrocution. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. If it is safe to do so, turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock.

Take an Active Role in Your Safety

Go to **ready.gov** and search for **flood**. Download the **FEMA app** to get more information about preparing for a **flood**. Find Emergency Safety Tips under Prepare.

BE PREPARED FOR A FLOOD

Failing to evacuate flooded areas, entering flood waters, or remaining after a flood has passed can result in injury or death.

FEMA

FEMA V-1005/ March 2018

Flooding is a temporary overflow of water onto land that is normally dry. It is the most common natural disaster in the U.S.

Results from rain, snow, coastal storms, storm surge, and overflows of dams and other water systems

Develops slowly or quickly. Flash floods can come with no warning

Causes outages, disrupt transportation, damage buildings, create landslides

IF YOU ARE UNDER A FLOOD WARNING, FIND SAFE SHELTER RIGHT AWAY

Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters.

Stay off bridges over fast-moving water.

Determine your best protection based on the type of flooding.

Evacuate if told to do so.

Move to higher ground or a higher floor.

Stay where you are.

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Natural Disasters and Severe Weather

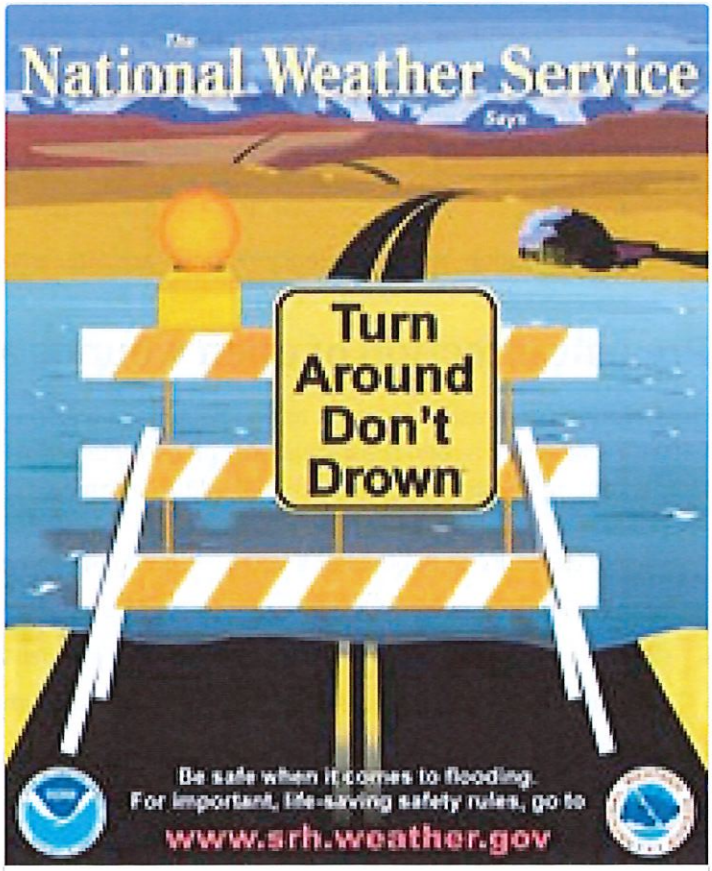
Floodwater After a Disaster or Emergency

Floodwater and standing waters can be dangerous and can make you vulnerable to infectious diseases, chemical hazards, and injuries. Protect yourself and your loved ones from the risks brought by floodwater by following these steps.

Don't drive in flooded areas — turn around, don't drown!

Floodwater can pose a drowning risk for everyone—regardless of their ability to swim. Swiftly moving shallow water can be deadly, and even shallow standing water can be dangerous for small children.

- Always follow warnings about flooded roads.
- Don't drive in flooded areas—cars or other vehicles won't protect you from floodwaters. They can be swept away or may stall in moving water.



National Weather Service: Turn Around Don't Drown®

Stay out of floodwater.

Floodwaters contain many things that may harm health. We don't know exactly what is in floodwater at any given point in time. Floodwater can contain:

- Downed power lines
- Human and livestock waste
- Household, medical, and industrial hazardous waste (chemical, biological, and radiological)
- Coal ash waste that can contain carcinogenic compounds such as arsenic, chromium, and mercury
- Other contaminants that can lead to illness

- Physical objects such as lumber, vehicles, and debris
- Wild or stray animals such as rodents and snakes

Exposure to contaminated floodwater can cause:

- Wound infections
- Skin rash
- Gastrointestinal illness
- Tetanus
- Leptospirosis (not common)

It is important to protect yourself from exposure to floodwater regardless of the source of contamination. The best way to protect yourself is to stay out of the water.

If you come in contact with floodwater:

- Wash the area with soap and clean water as soon as possible. If you don't have soap or water, use alcohol-based wipes or sanitizer.
- Take care of wounds and seek medical attention if necessary.
- Wash clothes contaminated with flood or sewage water in hot water and detergent before reusing them.

If you must enter floodwater, wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles.

Prevent injuries.

Floodwater may contain sharp objects, such as glass or metal fragments, that can cause injury and lead to infection. Prompt first aid can help heal small wounds and prevent infection.

If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a health care professional determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary based on individual records.

For more information, visit: Emergency Wound Care After a Natural Disaster

Prevent infection of open wounds and rashes.

Open wounds and rashes exposed to floodwater can become infected. Vibrios, for example, are naturally occurring bacteria that live in certain coastal waters and can cause skin infections when an open wound is exposed to them. This can happen during floods. To protect yourself and your family:

- Avoid exposure to floodwater if you have an open wound.
- Cover clean, open wounds with a waterproof bandage to reduce chance of infection.
- Keep open wounds as clean as possible by washing well with soap and clean water.
- If a wound develops redness, swelling, or oozing, seek immediate medical attention.

Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:

- There is a foreign object (soil, wood, metal, or other objects) embedded in the wound;
- The wound is at special risk of infection (such as a dog bite or a puncture by a dirty object);

- An old wound shows signs of becoming infected (increased pain and soreness, swelling, redness, draining, or you develop a fever).

For more information, visit: Emergency Wound Care After a Natural Disaster

Protect yourself and your loved ones from diarrheal diseases.

Be aware that floodwater may contain sewage, and eating or drinking anything contaminated by floodwater can cause diarrheal disease (such as *E. coli* or *Salmonella* infection). To protect yourself and your family:

- Wash your hands after contact with floodwater. Also be sure to wash children's hands with soap and water often and always before meals.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater areas.
- Do not allow children to play with toys that have been contaminated by floodwater and have not been disinfected.
- Do not bathe in water that may be contaminated with sewage or toxic chemicals. This includes rivers, streams, or lakes that are contaminated by floodwater.

For more information, visit:

- Personal Hygiene and Handwashing After a Disaster or Emergency
- Handwashing, Hygiene, and Diapering
- Cleaning and Sanitizing with Bleach
- CDC Floodwaters or Standing Waters

Protect yourself from animal and insect bites.

Floodwater can displace animals, insects, and reptiles. To protect yourself and your family, be alert and avoid contact.

For more information, visit: Protect Yourself from Animal- and Insect-Related Hazards After a Disaster

Be aware of possible chemicals in floodwater.

Floods can cause containers of chemicals to move from their normal storage spots.

- Don't attempt to move propane tanks you might find— they're dangerous and can cause a fire or explosion. If you find any, contact the police, fire department, or your State Fire Marshal's office immediately.
- Be extremely careful when removing car batteries. Even if they are in floodwater, car batteries may still have an electrical charge. Use insulated gloves and avoid coming in contact with any acid that may have spilled from the damaged car battery.

For more information, visit:

- Protect Yourself From Chemicals Released During a Natural Disaster
- Chemical Emergencies

Avoid electrical hazards inside or outside your home.

After a hurricane, flood or other natural disaster you need to be careful to avoid electrical hazards both in your home and elsewhere.

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Plan Ahead

More than a collection of names, phone numbers, and street addresses, an Emergency Action Plan is an instruction manual for how to *stay healthy*, *stay informed*, and *stay in contact* in an emergency. Because an Emergency Action Plan affects everyone in your household, the whole household should be involved in making and practicing the plan.

STAY HEALTHY
Know how to stay healthy, and when and where to find medical assistance.

STAY INFORMED
Pre-identify official sources of timely and reliable emergency information.

STAY IN CONTACT
Discuss ways to communicate with family, friends, and caregivers.

Emergency Action Plan

According to FEMA , over 60 percent of people do not have an emergency plan that they have discussed with their household. Here are 5 simple things you can do to start your Emergency Action Plan :

- Find phone numbers for your physician, pediatrician, pharmacist, and veterinarian. Other important numbers you should know include:
  - Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222
  - Animal Poison Control Helpline: 888-426-4435

- Shut off electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks in your home to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- NEVER touch a fallen power line. Call the power company to report fallen power lines. Avoid contact with overhead power lines during cleanup and other activities.
- Do not drive through standing water if downed power lines are in the water.
- If you believe someone has been electrocuted, call or have someone else call 911 or emergency medical help.

For more information, visit: Protect Yourself and Others From Electrical Hazards After a Disaster

Page last reviewed: September 13, 2018

Content source: National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC)

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Center for Preparedness and Response

Stay Healthy

Know how to stay healthy and where to find help in an emergency.

The Basics

- Use generators safely—outside, in a dry area, and at least 20 feet from any window, door, or vent to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- Wash your hands to prevent the spread of disease after a flood. Hand sanitizers are not effective when hands are visibly dirty, and do not eliminate all types of germs.
- Make an asthma management plan that identifies your known asthma triggers, describes your daily treatment (such as what kind of medicines to take and when to take them), and explains when to call the doctor or go to the emergency room.
- Check that smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors are working and placed throughout the house. Portable generators produce CO, which is odorless, colorless, tasteless, and can cause illness and death. Learn practical skills, like how to use generators safely in a power outage.
- Create custom go-kits out of rolling luggage, a backpack, a duffle bag, or a pillowcases for every member of your household to prepare for an evacuation.
- Put appliance thermometers in your freezer and fridge to help you determine if the food is safe after a power outage.

Quick Tips

Americans with Disabilities

More than 56 million Americans—19 percent of the population—live with some form of disability. Of those who self-report a disability, half say they have trouble walking and climbing stairs. Either issue could make it difficult to evacuate in an emergency. People with mobility disabilities can take the following steps to prepare for an emergency evacuation:

- Form a personal support network of family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers who can help you create communication and transportation plans in case of an evacuation
- Assess your evacuation needs and capabilities. Pre-identify

- Keep wounds clean and covered with a waterproof bandage around floodwater to reduce the chance of infection. Floodwater can spread bacteria such as tetanus and Vibro vulnificus and diseases like leptospirosis.
- Do NOT share prescription drugs. Doctors prescribe and dose medications with a person's particular illness, drug interactions, and medical history in mind.
- Use bottled water to reconstitute prescription drugs if clean tap water is unavailable. Unopened commercially bottled water is the safest and most reliable source of water in an emergency.
- If a life depends on the refrigerated drug, but the medications have been at room temperature, use them only until a new supply is available. Replace all refrigerated drugs as soon as possible.
- Take health-related personal items such as prescription medications and medical supplies with you in an evacuation. Do NOT assume an evacuation shelter can provide for your unique health needs.
- Double-check the setting on your medical device(s) after a power outage. An outage can cause medical devices to reset to their default or factory settings.
- Dialysis patients: Follow a 3-Day Emergency Diet to limit the buildup of water, protein wastes, and potassium if you are on dialysis but cannot get treatments.
- Identify emergency departments, urgent cares, dialysis centers, hemophilia treatment centers, veterinarians, etc. near your home and emergency meeting places, and along your designated evacuation route.
- Register with your local government if you may need evacuation assistance in an emergency because of a lack of transportation, or a medical or mobility issue.
- Contact your water and power companies to get on a "priority reconnection service" list of power-dependent customers if you rely on electrical medical equipment.
- People with disabilities: Conduct a self-assessment. Know what you can and cannot do. Talk with your health care provider about a realistic plan.
- People who use durable medical equipment: Show people in your support network, including family and friends, how to operate and maintain your medical devices.

two escape routes out of every room and two evacuation routes from home and work.

- Contact your local fire department and emergency management office to self-identify as someone who needs transportation assistance in an evacuation.

Resources

- Finding Other Water Sources in an Emergency
- Safe and Healthy Diapering for Emergency Settings
- Preventing Diarrheal Illness After a Disaster
- Asthma Care Before, During, and After a Hurricane or Other Tropical Storm
- How to Keep Your Breast Pump Kit Clean: The Essentials
- How to Clean, Sanitize, and Store Infant Feeding Items
- Cleaning and Preparing Personal Water Storage Containers

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Natural Disasters and Severe Weather

Preparing for a Flood

Keep yourself and your loved ones safe by planning ahead.

- Are you in a flash-flood prone 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.
- Make a communication plan and a disaster plan for your family.
- 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.
- Stay informed. Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- Inform local authorities about any special needs, i.e., elderly or bedridden people, or anyone with a disability.

Infographic: Be Ready - Floods

Get your home ready for a flood.

- Make sure you secure or protect any hazards in your home 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 if you don't already have one. 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.

If you are under a 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.
- Prepare an emergency water supply. Store at least 1 gallon of water per day for each person and each pet. Store at least a 3-day supply.
- Bring outdoor possessions, such as lawn furniture, grills and trash cans inside or tie them down securely.

Create an emergency supply kit.

Stock your home with supplies you may need during the flood by creating an emergency supply kit. Visit CDC's Personal Health Preparedness page for a list of supplies you'll want to include in your kit. Be sure to also include the following supplies in your kit:

- 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 or Picaridin, screens, or long-sleeved and long-legged clothing for protection from mosquitoes which may gather in pooled water remaining after the flood. (More information about these and other recommended repellents can be found in the fact sheet Updated Information Regarding Insect Repellents .)

Prepare a food and water supply.

Make sure you and your family have enough safe food and water (for drinking, cooking, bathing, etc.) available in the event of a flood. For more information, visit Food and Water Needs: Preparing for a Disaster or Emergency.

Prepare to evacuate.

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 rising waters.

Even if you haven't been ordered to evacuate yet, it's always best to be prepared when a flood watch is issued. To prepare your home, car, and loved ones for a potential evacuation:

- 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.
- Identify essential documents such as medical records, insurance card along with ID cards and put in waterproof material to carry with you during evacuation.
- Fill your clean water containers.
- If you have pet, identify a shelter designated for pets.
- 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.

If you are ordered to evacuate:

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 NOT ordered 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 home is damaged, or if you are instructed to do so by emergency personnel.

For more information, visit:

- Are you prepared?
- Ready.gov: Floods

Page last reviewed: October 9, 2018
Content source: National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC)

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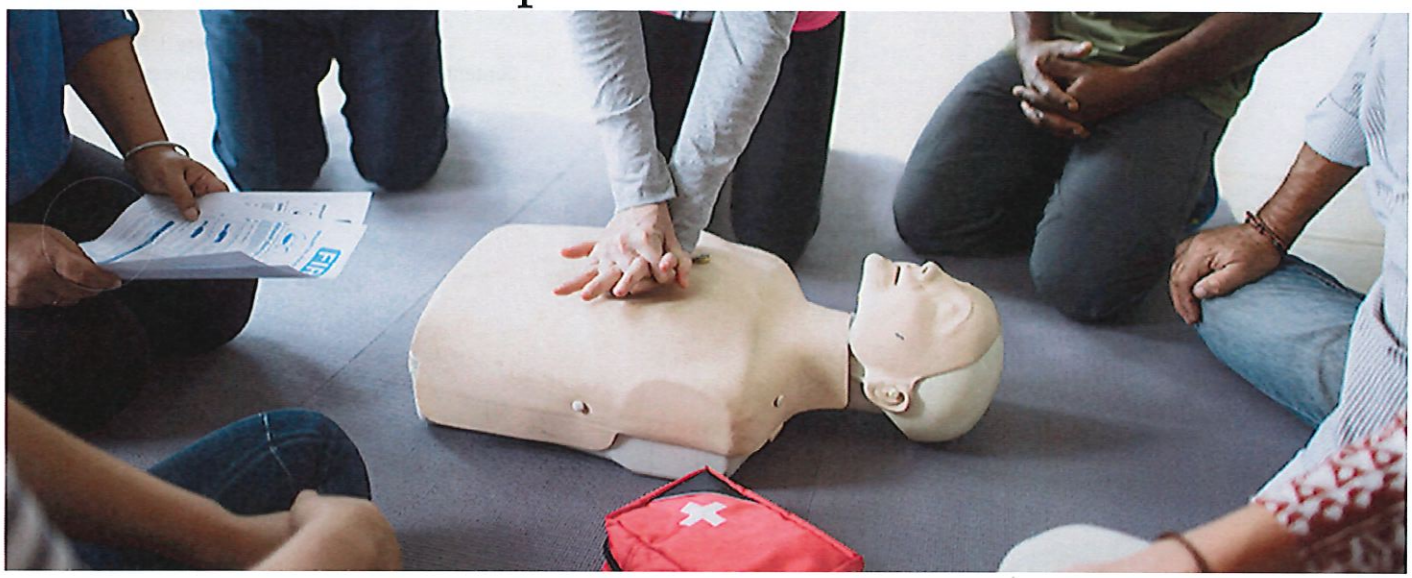
Personal Health Preparedness



A large-scale public health emergency like a hurricane and/or a lengthy power outage can limit your access to supplies and services for several days, weeks, or even months. Still, nearly half do not have an emergency kit for their home. Be prepared with food and safe water, basic supplies, and the personal items you need to protect your health in an emergency.

PAPERWORK

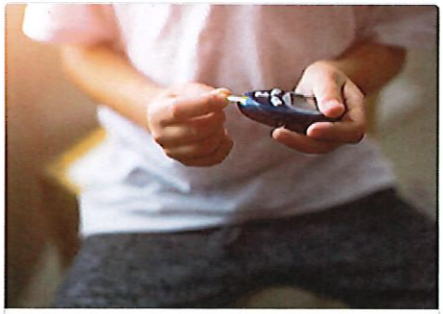
Collect and protect important documents and medical records.

POWER SOURCES

Prepare for power outages with backup power sources.

PRACTICAL SKILLS

Learn life-saving skills, such as CPR, to use until help arrives.



Are you resilient?

A person's "resilience" is their ability to bounce back from a difficult or life-changing event—like the diagnosis of chronic disease or the impacts of a natural disaster. People are

PRESCRIPTIONS

Prepare your prescription medications for an emergency.

PERSONAL NEEDS

Gather food, water, & medical supplies to last at least 72 hours.

more resilient and better able to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity when they make healthy choices, including the decision to prepare for different types of emergencies. Communities are more resilient when their citizens are prepared.

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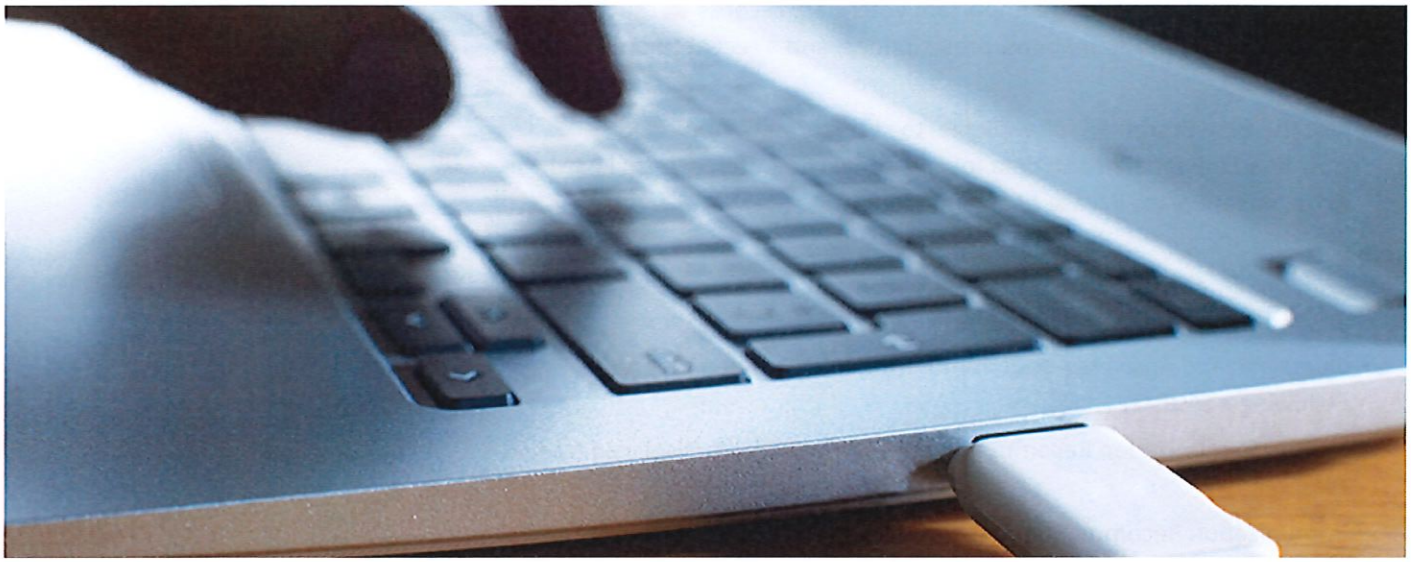
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Center for Preparedness and Response

Paperwork



Collect and protect important paperwork, including an Emergency Action Plan, insurance documents, and medical, vital, and immunization records.

The Basics

- Copies of medical documents and advance directives, including:
  - Health insurance card
  - Immunization and vaccination records
  - Living wills and power of attorney forms
  - Vital records (e.g., birth and death certificates and adoption records)
- Personal identification, including:
  - Passport
  - Driver's license
  - Social Security card
  - Green Card
- A current Care Plan with information about how to best care for your child with special healthcare needs.
- User manuals, model and serial numbers, and contact information for the manufacturer of medical devices, such as blood glucose meters and nebulizers.

Download PDF

Quick Tips

- Keep an up-to-date list of all prescription medications, including dosage amounts and the names of their generic equivalents, medical supply needs, and known allergies.
- Save electronic copies of important papers in a password-protected format to a flash or external hard drive or a secure cloud-based service.
- Store flash drives and hardcopies of important papers in a fireproof and waterproof container or safe, with a trusted friend or relative, or in a safety deposit box at a bank.
- Pet owners: Make copies of important veterinary records such as a rabies certificate, vaccinations, prescriptions, and a recent photograph of your pet(s).
- Use the Blue Button (if available) to securely view, print, and download personal health data to a personal computer, external hard drive, or safe place in case of an emergency.

Resources

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Content source: Center for Preparedness and Response

PREPARE YOUR HEALTH: **PAPERWORK**

Collect and protect important paperwork, including an Emergency Action Plan, insurance documents, and medical, vital, and immunization records.

THE BASICS:

- ☐ Copies of medical documents and advance directives, for example:
  - » Health insurance card
  - » Vaccination and immunization records
  - » Living wills and power of attorney forms
  - » Vital records (e.g., birth and death certificates and adoption records)
- ☐ Personal identification, for example:
  - » Passport
  - » Driver's license
  - » Social Security card
  - » Green Card
- ☐ A current emergency Care Plan with information about how to best care for your child with special healthcare needs.
- ☐ User manuals, model and serial numbers, and contact information for the manufacturer of medical devices, like blood glucose meters and nebulizers.

QUICK TIPS:

- Keep an up-to-date list of all prescription medications, including dosage amounts and names of the generic equivalents, and known allergies.
- Save electronic copies of important papers in a password-protected format to a flash or external hard drive.
- Store flash drives and hardcopies of important papers in a fireproof and waterproof container or safe, with a trusted friend or relative, or in a safety deposit box at a bank.
- Pet owners: Make copies of important veterinary paperwork such as a rabies certificate, vaccination records, prescriptions, and a recent photograph of your pet(s).
- Use the Blue Button (if available) to securely view, print, and download personal health data to a personal computer, external hard drive, or safe place in case of an emergency.

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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- Use the Blue Button (if available) to securely view, print, and download personal health data to a personal computer, external hard drive, or safe place in case of an emergency.

Resources

- Questions and Answers About Immunization Recommendations Following a Disaster
- Interim Immunization Recommendations for Individuals Displaced by a Disaster
- Immunization Recommendations for Disaster Responders
- Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables (FEMA)
- Understanding Encryption (US-CERT)

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Blue Button

About Blue Button

The Blue Button symbol signifies that a site has functionality for customers download health records. You can use your health data to improve your health and to have more control over your personal health information and your family's healthcare.

- Do you want to feel more in control of your health and your personal health information?
- Do you have a health issue?
- Are you caring for an elderly parent?
- Are you changing doctors?
- Do you need to find the results of a medical test or a complete and current list of your medications?

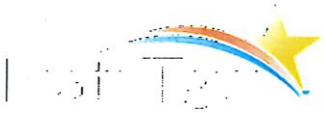
Blue Button may be able to help.

Look for the Blue Button symbol and take action using your personal health information. Consider joining the movement.

Your Health Records

Health information about you may be stored in many places, such as doctors' offices, hospitals, drug stores, and health insurance companies. The Blue Button symbol signifies that an organization has a way for you to access your health records electronically so you can:

- Share them with your doctor or trusted family members or caregivers
- Check to make sure the information, such as your medication list, is accurate and complete
- Keep track of when your child had his/her last vaccination



Health IT in Health Care Settings

Blue Button

Check Your Data

Frequently Asked Questions

Logo and Usage

Protect Your Health Information

Behavioral Health

Emergency Medical Services & Emergency Preparedness

FHA CONNECT

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMP)

Public Health

Rural Health

Telemedicine

Health IT for Pediatric Care and Practice Settings

Long-Term and Post-Acute Care

Patient-Generated Health Data

Social Determinants of Health

- Have your medical history available in case of emergency, when traveling, seeking a second opinion, or switching health insurance companies
- Plug your health information into apps and tools that help you set and reach personalized health goals.

You have a legal right to receive your personal health information. Blue Button is one of the ways this information may be made available to you. Look for the Blue Button symbol, and ask your health care providers or health insurance company if they offer you the ability to view online, download, and share your health records.

Your Rights

As Americans, we each have the legal right to access our own health records held by doctors, hospitals and others who provide healthcare services for us. And we have the option of getting our records on paper or electronically depending on how they are stored. You can exercise your rights by downloading your health records through an online portal, or by asking how to get a copy of your health records. Some doctors or hospitals may not be familiar with your rights to access your information about your own health. You can print out and share with them a letter that explains these rights [PDF - 82 KB].

What kind of information is available to you?

It depends on whether you are getting information from your health care provider (doctor, hospital, nursing home, etc.), your health insurance company, or another source such as a drug store or a lab since each has different kinds of information. In general, you may expect to be able to electronically access important information such as:

- Current medications you are taking
- Any allergies you have
- Medical treatment information from your doctor or hospital visits
- Your lab test results
- Your health insurance claims information (financial information, clinical information and more)

Until recently, many health records were stored in paper files, so it wasn't very easy for you to access or use this information. But that is changing as more doctors and hospitals adopt electronic health records (EHRs) and other health information technologies, including mobile health apps.

Medicare beneficiaries can view and download their Medicare claims data in a more timely and user-friendly format than ever before. That information now covers three years of your health history, including claims information on services covered under Medicare Parts A and B, and a list of medications that were purchased under Part D. Look for the Blue Button symbol on the MyMedicare web site.

Veterans can find the Blue Button symbol on the MyHealtheVet website and download demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity and more), emergency contacts, a list of their prescription medications, clinical notes, and wellness reminders.

You may want to check back often as more and more organizations join the Blue Button movement. Online health records are not yet available to everyone, but access is rapidly growing, and if you ask for access you can help grow it faster.

Content last reviewed on April 8, 2019