



# FLOOD SAFETY

The most common natural disaster America faces is flooding. In 2019, 92 American lives were lost in [floods](#). Natural disasters such as floods are unpredictable due to the fact they can take a few weeks or a few hours to develop. Floods cannot be prevented, but Hoosiers can be prepared when one occurs.

## TERMS TO KNOW

A variety of weather terms are used during natural disasters like flooding, and while they may sound similar, there is an important difference among them.

- **Flood:** The overflowing of a waterway into a normally dry area.
- **Flash Flood:** A heavy rush of water normally caused by heavy rains. Flash floods occur with little to no warning.
- **Flood Watch:** Conditions for local flooding are favorable.
- **Flood Warning:** A flood is occurring or is likely to occur soon.
- **Flash Flood Watch:** Conditions may develop that lead to flash flooding.
- **Flash Flood Warning:** Flash flooding is imminent or occurring.

## BEFORE A FLOOD

A flood can occur without much prior warning. Following a few, simple safety tips to prepare before a flood occurs will help keep the entire household safe during a stressful situation.

- Contact insurance providers to purchase flood insurance.
- Become aware of any flood plains in the area. Flood plains are flat areas of land near a body of water that is prone to flooding.
- If in a flood plain, put hot water heaters, electrical panels and furnaces on floors that have lower chances of being flooded.
- Make sure preparedness kits are portable for easy transport if evacuation is necessary. Preparedness kits should be tailored to household needs. Create a map of multiple possible evacuation routes.
- Have the basement waterproofed.
- If flooding is possible, try and create a barrier between the property and the water, or its likely path.

## DURING A FLOOD

- Immediately evacuate the home and go to high ground if flooding is possible.
- If evacuating, take all pets, but choose a pet-friendly evacuation spot beforehand.
- Do not try to drive through water because as little as 2 feet can cause most cars to float, and as little as a few inches of moving water can wash most cars away with the current.
- Do not try to cross moving water on foot since as little as a few inches can knock an adult off his or her feet.
- Monitor local news radio, TV or social media postings for additional information or instructions from local officials.

## AFTER A FLOOD

Recovery after a flood focuses on the citizen's safety. Diligently following safety tips and information provided by local officials will help make the recovery process run as efficiently as possible.

- If injured, seek necessary medical care at the nearest hospital or clinic.
- Avoid disaster areas.
- Stay out of any building if floodwaters remain around the establishment.
- Avoid entering any building before local officials have said it is safe to do so.
- Report broken utility lines to the appropriate authorities.
- When entering buildings, use extreme caution.
- Wear sturdy shoes.
- Use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings.
- Look for fire hazards.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into buildings with the floodwaters.
- Watch for loose plaster, drywall and ceilings that could fall.
- Take pictures of the damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance claims
- Throw away food that has come into contact with flood waters. Some canned foods may be salvageable.
- Do not drink or use floodwater.
- Pump out a flooded basement gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.
- Professionally service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible.
- Follow FEMA or Red Cross guidelines about cleaning flood damaged homes.

