



FLOODS

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Floods can develop slowly, over a period of days, or within a few minutes, without any visible signs of rain, such as with flash floods. It is a good idea to be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live, but especially if you live in a low lying area. Even very small streams, dry steam beds, or low lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood.

What to do in a heavy rainfall:

- Stay away from stream beds.
- Use your map. Know whether you are on low ground or below a dam.
- Move to higher ground. Many roads and trails parallel existing drainage patterns, and may be swept away by flood waters. Stay out of these low lying areas when there is a risk of flooding.
- Never attempt to outrun a flood on foot or in your vehicle, climb to safety.
- Avoid driving through flooded areas. Flood waters can rise quickly and sweep vehicles away. If an area is flooded, consider taking an alternate route.

Before a flood:

Know the National Weather Service terms:

- **Flash flood watch** means that heavy rains are occurring or may occur, and may cause flash flooding. Be Alert.
- **Flash flood warning** means that flash flooding is occurring or imminent. If you live in the warning area, you should act immediately.

During a flood:

- Be aware of possible flash flooding hazards. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Listen to radio or television stations for local information.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, or other areas prone to flooding.
- If local authorities issue a flood watch, prepare to evacuate: Secure your home; if instructed, turn off utilities at the main switches or valves; fill bathtubs with water in case water becomes contaminated or unavailable. Before filling the tub, sterilize it with a diluted bleach solution.
- Be especially careful if walking and avoid walking through moving water. Moving water can easily knock you off your feet.
- Avoid driving into flooded areas. Water may reach the bottom of most passenger vehicles causing loss of control and possible stalling.



After a flood:

- Avoid flood waters, the water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. The water may also be electrically charged from downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where flood waters have receded, the road may have been weakened and may collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them to the power company.
- Stay away from designated disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe. Be caution when returning, there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.

For addition information regarding flood preparedness and safety:

www.emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods www.ready.gov/floods

Flood fact sheet provided by Jefferson County Public Health, Emergency Preparedness and Response Program 303-271-5700 or visit: <http://jeffco.us/public-health/disasters-outbreaks-emergencies/emergency-preparedness/>
