

Rain and Floods Fact Sheet

RAIN

Rain storms can be dangerous; in particular, thunderstorms with flooding rain and winds can cause significant injury and damage to buildings and foliage.

Rain storms are dangerous because they can lead to urban flooding and flash floods.

FLOODING

Flooding happens during heavy rains, when rivers overflow, when snow melts too fast, or when dams or levees break. This is one of the most common natural-weather events nationally but, other than urban flooding during storm, seldom impact Minneapolis.

Flooding may be only a few inches of water, or it may cover a house to the rooftop. Floods that happen very quickly are called flash floods.

FACT CHECK

- Which of the following does NOT cause a flood?
 - Tropical storms and hurricanes
 - Spring thaw and melting snow
 - New construction
 - None – they can all cause floods
- True or False? One foot of water is enough to make most cars float.
- True or False? Six inches of moving water can sweep you off your feet.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

- D. They can all cause floods.
- True!
- True. Stay away from moving water!



AM I AT RISK?

Floods can occur in Minneapolis but we seldom experience devastating flash flooding. Some floods develop slowly, and some can build in just a few minutes. People who live in low-lying areas – near water or behind a levee or dam – are at even greater risk. People residing and working along rivers, streams and low lying areas are at greater risk of flooding than those on higher ground.

TURN AROUND DON'T DROWN®

Each year, more deaths occur due to flooding than from any other thunderstorm related hazard. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that over half of all flood-related drowning occur when a vehicle is driven into hazardous flood water. The next highest percentage of flood-related deaths is due to walking into or near flood waters. People underestimate the force and power of water. Many of the deaths occur in automobiles as they are swept downstream. Of these drowning, many are preventable, but too many people continue to drive around the barriers that warn you the road is flooded. A mere 6 inches of fast-moving flood water can knock over an adult. It takes just 12 inches of rushing water to carry away a small car, while 2 feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles. It is never safe to drive or walk into flood waters.

WORDS TO KNOW

- Flood Watch** - A message that flooding is possible - listen to local radio or TV for more information. You may receive an alert on a cell phone.
- Flood Warning** - A message that flooding will occur soon, if it hasn't already, and to move to higher ground or evacuate immediately
- Flash Flood** - A flood that can happen within minutes or hours of heavy rainfall, a dam or levee failure, or city drains overflowing
- Levee/Dam** - A manmade structure to contain or prevent water from moving past a certain point

For more information see the Minneapolis Emergency Management website at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/emergency/>

DID YOU KNOW?

Flooding can change familiar places, like walkways, roads and fields. Avoid walking through water. It might be deeper than you think!

WINTER STORM DO'S AND DON'TS

Do

- Be alert, listen for official information and instructions
- Activate home preparedness plan and kit
- Move to high ground
- Evacuate immediately if you think you are at risk or advised to do so
- Avoid contaminated water, well water
- Use boiled or bottled water
- Use mosquito repellents
- Wash hands, cover open wounds
- Dispose of spoiled foods; get rid of garbage
- Turn off all of your electrical and gas appliances. Utilities should be shut off at the mains.
- Move important items up off floor or to higher floor
- Wear solid work gloves and boots when evacuating or when working in a post-flood environment
- Obtain flood insurance

Do Not

- Drive through flooded roadways
- Walk or swim through flowing water
- Touch downed power lines, poles
- Touch flood water
- Allow pets outside
- Return home until authorities declare it is safe to do so
- Enter a property that has been flooded without first checking for signs of structural damage - if in doubt it should be checked professionally.
- Turn on utilities until inspected and safe to do so
- Be aware of gas leaks - do not smoke or use candles or open flames.
- Handle electrical equipment or appliances in humid areas or in standing water.
- Use your TV if it sits on a wet carpet or floor or on humid concrete floors. The basic rule is that water and electricity don't mix!
- Enter buildings that are surrounded by floodwaters.

BE PREPARED

Before

Build an emergency kit. Make a family emergency plan to include communications plan and reunification. Tell all family members if you hear a flood watch or warning on the TV or radio. If you reside in a flood zone maintain a household evacuation kit. (See our website below for more information and tools.)

During

Listen to authorities and safety officials. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Activate your family emergency plan and evacuation kit. Help your family move important items to an upper floor. Do not walk through moving water. Even 6" of water can make you fall.

After

Stay away from flood water. It could be contaminated, meaning contain dangerous substances. Stay away from moving water. It can knock you off your feet. Stay out of the way of emergency workers so they can do their job easily.

RECEIVE ALERTS

How will you receive alerts, warnings and official information and instructions?

The National Weather Service issues watches and warnings that are distributed via NOAA All-Hazards Radio alerts and through radio and television stations.

Local emergency managers can also use outdoor sirens and can issue alerts through various notification systems including the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system which will send warnings directly to cell phones in affected areas. These short messages are like a text message, and will be broadcast to all mobile phones within range of designated cell towers.

The alerts will tell you the type of warning, the affected area, and the expected duration of the event.

Minneapolis uses the SwiftReach notification system to alert residents to snow and other emergencies. With SwiftReach, residents will:

- Receive calls with information specific to your address
- Get notified of emergencies by phone
- Deaf or hard of hearing: get emergency messages sent to your TTY/TDD phones

If you are not receiving these calls, register now at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/subscriptions/>

FLOOD INSURANCE

If your home has plumbing fixtures or floor drains below street level, your basement could flood. Water damage from heavy rain storms, snow melt or sewer backups are most often not covered by the homeowner's policy, but it may be covered by flood insurance. Even if you do not live in a FEMA designated flood zone, it might be wise to get flood insurance. Approximately 25% of flood-related claims are for homes outside of a FEMA designated flood zone.

If you feel your home may be susceptible to flooding, you should consider obtaining flood insurance prior to when you think you may need it. Policies typically require a 30-day waiting period before becoming effective. Even where flooding occurs more regularly and slowly, thirty days may be too long. Snowmelt flooding, heavy rainfall and flash flooding can occur with little warning. Contact your insurance agent for additional information. Additionally, the risk level of a particular area can change over time. New construction development and environmental changes can alter the impact of flood waters in your area.

If your home is in a flood zone (also called a flood plain), your mortgage lender will require flood insurance. Flood zones are mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). To find a map of flood zones, go to the FEMA website at www.fema.gov.