

FLOODS

A flood is the inundation of a normally dry area resulting from a variety of natural and human-induced processes.

Floods can be caused by heavy rain, snow melt, severe storms, hurricanes, breaches of levees or dams or poorly designed development.

On average, about 100 lives and \$6 billion worth of property are lost due to floods each year.



Willamette River 1996 Flood

National Weather Service Portland

Flood Facts

- Floods are the second most deadly natural disaster after heat waves.
- The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 was the most destructive river flood in U.S. history, breaching 145 levees and killing 245 people across 7 states.
- The Great Flood of 1993, along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, was comparable to the 1927 flood and caused \$15 billion in damages.
- Most of the \$200 billion in damages associated with Hurricane Katrina was the result of flooding.
- Today, the majority of fatalities during floods occur because people try to drive through flood waters. A car can float in just a few inches of water and even heavy SUVs can be swept away in less than two feet of water.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

Participating communities adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances to reduce future losses from floods. In exchange, community members may purchase federally backed flood insurance that would not otherwise be available.

- * NFIP compliant buildings suffer 80% less damage from flooding than non-compliant buildings.
- * Nationwide, flood damage is reduced by \$1 billion through implementation of NFIP.
- * Every \$3 paid in insurance claims saves \$1 in disaster assistance payments.
- * Homeowners can call the Map Assistance Center at 1-800-358-9616 to obtain a flood hazard map for their community.

Floods Hazard Mitigation

Prepare your home for a flood

- ◆ Avoid building in flood plains.
- ◆ Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel.
- ◆ Install “check valves” in sewer traps.
- ◆ Construct barriers (levees or flood-walls) to protect infrastructure.
- ◆ Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds.

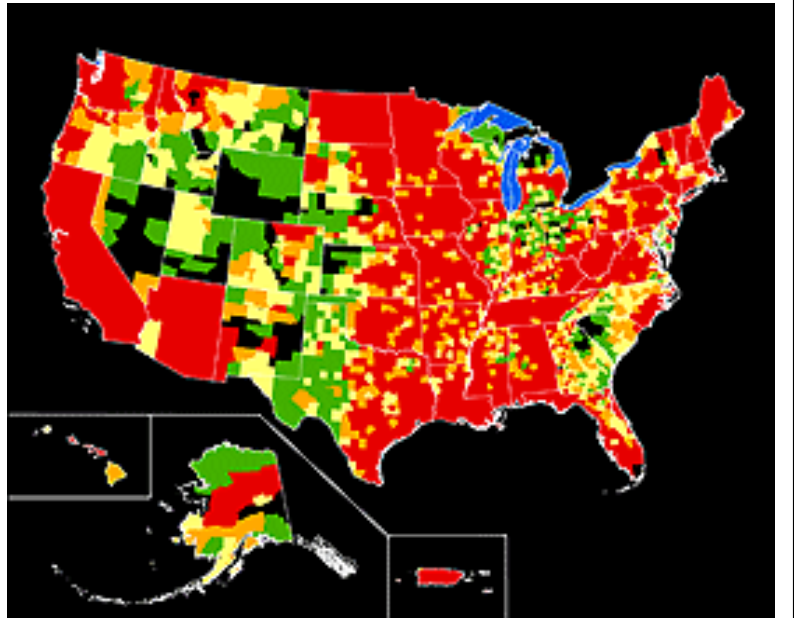
When a “Flood Watch” or “Flood Warning” has been issued

- ◆ Listen to the radio or television for information.
- ◆ Avoid streams and drainage channels.
- ◆ Turn off utilities at the main switch or valve and disconnect electronic appliances.
- ◆ Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- ◆ Do not walk in moving water.
- ◆ Do not drive on flooded streets.

After a flood

- ◆ Find out if your community’s water is safe to drink.
- ◆ Avoid contact with floodwaters, which may be contaminated.
- ◆ Be aware of weakened roadways and bridges.
- ◆ Stay away from downed power lines.
- ◆ Service damaged septic tanks as soon as possible.
- ◆ Clean and disinfect everything that got wet.

Adapted from FEMA: Are you Ready?



FLOODS CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE

Presidential disaster declarations related to flooding: Green areas represent one declaration; yellow areas are two declarations; orange areas are three declarations; red areas are four or more declarations between June 1, 1965, and June 1, 2003.

Sources: FEMA, Michael Baker Jr., Inc., the National Atlas, and the USGS

Flood Information Resources

USGS: Natural Hazards—Floods
www.usgs.gov/hazards/floods/

NOAA: Floods
www.noaawatch.gov/floods.php

FEMA: Are You Ready?
www.fema.gov/areyouready/flood.shtm

National Weather Service
www.nws.noaa.gov

American Red Cross: Preparedness Fast Facts site
www.redcross.org/

The **Congressional Hazards Caucus** is co-chaired by Senators Mary Landrieu (LA), Ben Nelson (NE), and Lisa Murkowski (AK) and Representatives Dennis Moore (KS), Jo Bonner (AL) and Zoe Lofgren (CA). The Caucus helps individuals, businesses, and communities better prepare for and mitigate the costs of disasters. The Caucus seeks to foster dialogue on steps that government and citizens can take to lessen the severity of these disasters. To learn more about the Caucus, visit www.hazardiscaucus.org.