

Preparing for a Flood

Steps to Take Today

- Warning System. Learn about the warning system used during a flood. (See the next columns.)
- Flood Insurance. A regular homeowner's policy will not cover losses caused by the flooding. Supplemental flood insurance is available from your agent. Property owners may insure their buildings and contents; renters may insure their possessions.
 - Keep your policy in a safe place, such as a safe-deposit box.
- List of Belongings. Make a list of your property so that you can substantiate an insurance claim. Take photos of major items. Keep the list and photos in a safe place.
- Evacuation Route. Learn the best route from your home to safe, high ground. Choose a family rendezvous point in case you are separated during a flood. Arrange a place that you and your family can live during an emergency.
- Evacuation Kit. Prepare an evacuation kit that includes: a battery-operated radio; a flashlight; spare batteries; bottled water; canned goods; rain gear; warm clothing.
- Shut-off Valves. Learn where the water, gas, and electrical shutoffs are in your home.
- Protection Plan. Think about how you would protect belongings during a flood. Find a place where you can park cars, RVs, trailers, etc. If you are a business owner, identify expensive items in your inventory that can be moved to higher shelves.
- Raise Your Home. Consider raising the foundation of your home to provide permanent protection from flooding.
- Obtain Information. The building department is available for onsite assessments of property and for the review of flood maps. Elevation certificates for many properties within the City are on file and available for review, as well.

When Flooding Is Likely

- Flood Level. A river gauge in Deming is used to monitor the flood level – most bulletins refer to the gauge's reading. Flooding usually starts in Everson when the North Cedarville gauge reads **146.5**, and water arrives in Sumas **10 to 12 hours** thereafter.
- Information. Monitor the river by:
 - Tuning your radio to local stations such as KGMI, 790 AM
 - Monitoring the county public works frequency 150.995 on your scanner.
 - Calling (360) 738-4551. A recording will give you up-to-date information on flooding, road conditions and other information.
- Siren. When the river overflows in Everson, the siren on top of City Hall will be sounded. It will be sounded every two hours as long as flooding continues. You will also hear announcements for the P.A. system in the police patrol cars.
- Pre-evacuation. Make sure your evacuation kit is ready. Do not forget vital prescriptions medicines.
- Property Protection. **If time permits** (if no evacuation order has been received), you can take steps to protect your property.
 - Move furniture and small appliances to the second floor or to a higher surface.
 - Shutoff electric, gas and water service.
 - Evacuate vehicles as planned.
 - Move toxic substances to high spots.
- Sandbags. Sandbags can be used to block minor amounts of water. During flood warnings, sand and bags are available near the railroad tracks at the corner of Railroad and First Street.
- The City of Sumas will make site visits to provides one on one advice to a property owner regarding flooding and drainage issues on private property.

During the Flood

- Tune In. Listen to local radio stations such as KGMI, 790 AM. Also listen for directions from patrol car loudspeakers.
- Telephones. Stay off the phone except for essential calls. City hall is the local command center. To request help or report important information, **call 360-988-5711**. If that number is inoperable call 360-988-0229. DO not call 911 except for life-threatening emergencies.
- Evacuation. When ordered to evacuate, do so immediately. DO not ignore the advice of the public safety experts. Try to follow the safe route that you've already planned.
- Neighbors. Help your elderly or disabled neighbors.
- Driving. If possible, DO NOT drive through a flooded area. There might be submerged obstacles that you can't see. Especially avoid driving in a flooded area at night. MOST DROWNINGS DURING A FLOOD OCCUR WITHIN A CAR OR TRUCK. If your car stalls, abandon the car and wade to a safe place.

DO NOT drive past road barriers put up by police or public works crew.

Driving through a flooded area create waves that can increase the flood damage to nearby residences and businesses.

- Wading. Avoid wading through water that reaches higher than your knee.
- Stranded? If you are unable to evacuate your house because of high water, move to the second floor or to the roof. Wait for a rescue boat to arrive.
- Electricity. Electrocutation is a major killer in floods. Stay away from downed power lines. Report downed lines at 360-988-5711.

After the Flood

- Structural Check. Before entering a building, check for structural damage. Make sure the building is not in danger of collapsing. [IF your building has been severely damaged, now may be the time to elevate or flood-proof the building.]
- Gas. Be alert for the smell of gas. Do not use an open flame for light.
- Animals. Small animals may have looked for shelter in your home. Use a stick to poke and turn items over and scare away small animals.
- Utilities. Be cautious about turning on electricity and gas. Check for live wires, shorts, etc.
- Water. Do not start using city water until it has been declared safe.
- Appliances. Do not use appliances or motors that have gotten wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned and dried by a professional.
- Perishables. Food or medicines that have gotten wet might be contaminated by chemicals, sewage, etc. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Clean-up. Clean everything that got wet. Refrigerators, sofas, and other hard goods should be hosed off and kept for the insurance adjuster's inspection. Use a household cleanser to clean other items.
- Basements. A flooded basement should be pumped out gradually over a period of three days. Rapid pumping might lead to structural damage.
- Photographs. Take pictures of the damage to your building and its contents. Contact your agent to make a claim.

CRAWLSPACE

IF THE FLOOD VENTS ARE TO BE PLUGGED IT SHOULD BE DONE FROM INSIDE THE CRAWL SPACE OR LEFT OUT DURING THE FLOOD SEASON.