

# Preparing for Heavy Rains + Storms



*In RainReady<sup>SM</sup> communities, better water management means that homes, schools, and businesses are prepared for rain—whether too much or too little. RainReady programs keep residences secure and dry, services running, and rivers and lakes clean.*



Before heavy rain events begin, it is critical to be prepared for the possibility of flooding. Taking the following steps can help keep your household and your property out of danger.

## **BEFORE THE EVENT:**

Inspect your home. Remove leaves and debris from gutters, clear your storm drains and drainage areas of any debris or trash, make sure that windows and doors are properly secured, and make sure your sump pump is working if you have one. During the winter, remove ice and snow from areas near drains and downspouts. If there is snow around your home's foundation, clear it before it melts. Moving snow just three to five feet away from the house may reduce risk of water damage.

If there's a risk of severe flooding in your area, move your valuable belongings to the upper floors. Bring inside possessions like lawn furniture, grills, and trash cans, or else tie them down securely. Charge your cell phone, put fresh batteries in your flashlights, and make sure you have adequate food and water for a few days. You can fill your bathtubs, sinks, and plastic soda bottles with clean water, but sanitize the sinks and tubs first by cleaning with bleach and rinsing them.

## **DURING THE EVENT:**

If floodwater enters your property, call your town or city. Even if they can't come out to your property, it is still important that they have a record of your flooding incident for future reference.

If there's water in your home and a sump pump is ineffective, ensure that water stays away from outlets and other electrical sources. Carefully turn off your main electrical switch while standing on a dry, non-conductive surface such as heavy rubber, plastic, or dry wood. Also be alert for gas leaks. If the water rises high enough to extinguish the pilot light on your water heater or furnace, it may be letting gas into the property. Turn off the gas supply to these units, if possible. Do not use candles, lanterns, or open flames in the area, and do not smoke until you are absolutely certain that leaking gas is not an issue.

If the waters start to rise inside your house before you have evacuated, retreat to the second floor, the attic, or, if necessary, the roof. Take dry clothing, cell phone, flashlights, and a portable radio with you. Don't try to swim to safety. Instead, wait for rescuers to come to you.

## Preparing for Extreme Weather Events

If you decide to leave your property, do not walk through flooded areas. As little as six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. Make sure that you do not drive through a flooded area. If you come upon a flooded road, turn around and go another way. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Since electric currents pass easily through water, electrocution is another major cause of death during floods, so stay away from downed power lines and electrical wires.

### AFTER THE EVENT:

Wait for the water to drain out of the property before reentering, and check for structural damage before you enter any buildings. When you do enter a building, do not use matches, cigarette lighters, or any other open flames, since gas may still be trapped inside. Instead, use a flashlight to find your way. Keep the power off until an electrician has inspected your system for safety.

If your home, apartment, or business has suffered severe damage, immediately call the insurance company or agent who handles your flood insurance policy to file a claim. Even if you are not insured, make a written record of the date and time the flooding started and ended, and note the depth of the water. Document and photograph items that were damaged, and record their estimated value.



If damage is severe, consider a professional cleaning service. If you are cleaning the property yourself, wear appropriate protection, such as rubber boots and gloves. Make sure to disinfect any affected areas with a solution of water and bleach (four tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water), and always save receipts for out-of-pocket expenses on clean-ups.

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