

FLOODWATERS CARRY SERIOUS HEALTH RISKS!

Charleston District, Emergency Management Division

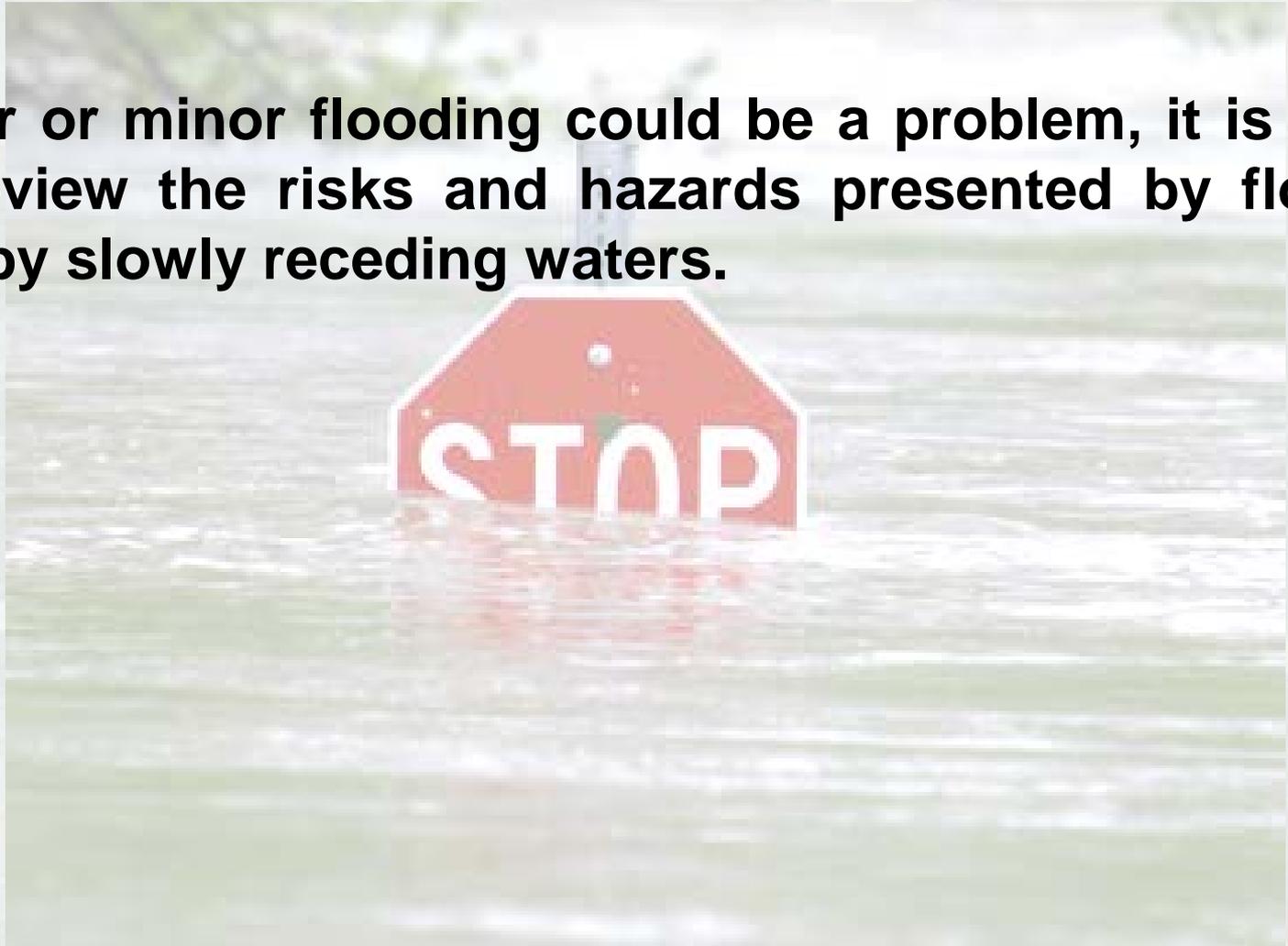


US Army Corps of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG®





Major or minor flooding could be a problem, it is time to review the risks and hazards presented by floods and by slowly receding waters.

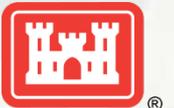




FLOOD FACTS:

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Some floods develop slowly, while others such as flash floods can develop in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain.

Floods can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large affecting entire river basins and multiple states.





FLOOD FACTS (continued):

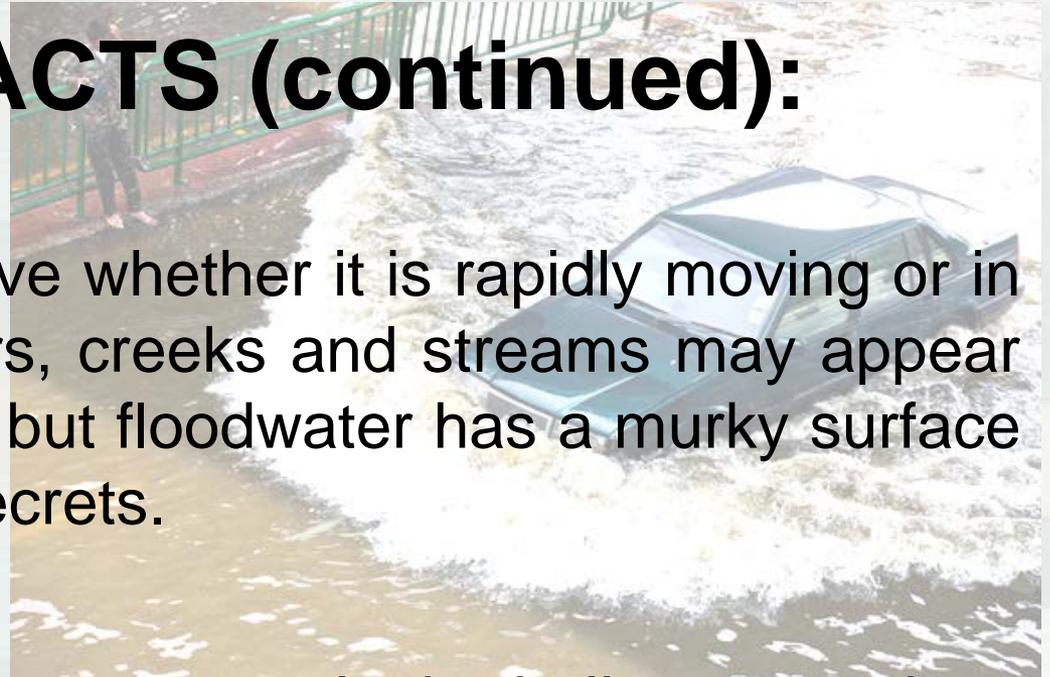
Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live or work, but especially if you are in low-lying areas, near water, behind a levee or downstream from a dam. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds or low-lying ground that appear harmless in dry weather can flood.





FLOOD FACTS (continued):

- Water can be deceptive whether it is rapidly moving or in a standing state. Rivers, creeks and streams may appear to be shallow or placid, but floodwater has a murky surface that hides dangerous secrets.
- Flooded roads and streets may look shallow enough to keep vehicle tires in contact with the road, but it only takes a few inches of water to break that contact and turn the car into an uncontrollable force. With no traction and no way to control movement, currents can pick up a car and carry it into deeper water, holes or ditches.





SAFETY TIPS:

- Do not ever drive through standing water, no matter how shallow or placid it appears to be.
- Look carefully for downed power lines or electrical hazards. Do not go near them.
- When forced to walk through the water, use a long stick to check for deep spots, objects or holes.
- At the flood warning stage, remove any trash, lawn furniture, junk and loose materials from outside areas around the home.





SAFETY TIPS (continued):

- Make sure that Tetanus vaccinations are up to date.
- Protect open wounds from any contact with floodwater.
- Do not eat anything that was in contact with floodwater.
- Wash anything that comes into contact with floodwater thoroughly.
- Do not keep or store flood water or use it in vegetable or food producing gardens.
- Never play or swim in flood water, no matter how clear or placid the water seems to be.





SAFETY TIPS (continued):

- Try to clear leaves, trash and twigs that build up in storm/ sewer drains.
- More danger comes from downed power lines that can be a visible hazard. Unseen and exposed electrical wires can also send currents through the water.





SAFETY TIPS (continued):

- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewer systems are serious health hazards.
- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.
- Rest often and eat well.
- Keep a manageable schedule. Make a list and do jobs one at a time.





WHAT TO DO BEFORE A FLOOD (Planning & Prevention):

- Make a family communications plan.
- Build an emergency/ disaster kit.
- Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electrical panel in your home if you live in an area that has a high flood risk.
- Consider installing “check valves” to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home.
- If feasible, construct barriers to stop floodwater from entering the building and seal wells in basements with waterproofing compounds.





MAKE A PLAN:

Planning for an emergency is not much different from planning for a party or vacation. Make sure that your emergency plan includes evacuation and reunion plans; out-of-state contact person's name and number; the location of your emergency supplies and other pertinent information. By planning now, you will be ready for the next emergency





MAKE AN EMERGENCY/ DISASTER KIT:

Everyone should have disaster supplies kits stored in accessible locations at home, at work and in your vehicle. Having emergency supplies readily available can reduce the impact of an earthquake or other emergency on you and your family. Your disaster supplies kits should include food, water, flashlights, portable radios, batteries, a first aid kit, cash, extra medications, a whistle, fire extinguisher, etc.





WHAT TO DO DURING A FLOOD:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of stream, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without typical warnings such as rain clouds or heavy rain.





WHAT TO DO DURING A FLOOD (continued):

If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.





WHAT TO DO DURING A FLOOD (continued):

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive in flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be swept away quickly.
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams, rivers, creeks, particularly during threatening conditions.





WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD:

Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers still exist. Here are some things to remember in the days ahead:

- Use local alerts and warning systems to get information and expert informed advice as soon as available.
- Avoid moving water.
- Stay away from damaged areas unless your assistance has been specifically requested by police, fire or relief organization.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.





WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD (continued):

- Play it safe. Additional flooding and flash flooding can occur, listen to local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
- Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may hide hazards and it's also slippery. Avoid walking or driving through it.





WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD (continued):

- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have been weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.





WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD (continued):

- Turn off the electricity at the main breaker or fuse box, even if the power is off in your community. That way, you can decide when your home is dry enough to turn it back on.
- Get a copy of the book “Repairing Your Flooded Home” which is available free from the American Red Cross or your state or local emergency manager. It will tell you:
 - How to enter your home safely.
 - How to protect your home and belongings from further damage.
 - How to record damage to support insurance claims and request for assistance.
 - How to check for gas or water leaks and how to have service restored.
 - How to clean up appliances, furniture, floors and other belongings.





WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD (continued):

- The Red Cross can provide you with a clean up kit: mop, broom, bucket and cleaning supplies.
- Contact your insurance agent to discuss claims.
- Listen to radio for information on assistance that may be provided by the state or Federal government or other organizations.
- If you hire clean up or repair contractors, check references and be sure they are qualified to do the job. Be wary of people who drive through neighborhoods offering help in cleaning up or repairing your home.





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