

Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance

GRAFTON · HOLDEN · LEICESTER · MILLBURY · SHREWSBURY · WEST BOYLSTON · WORCESTER



Flood Safety Tips

Due to the forecast of heavy rainfall in the region over the next 24 hours, the Central MA Regional Public Health Alliance is reminding residents to be aware of the possible health and safety issues related to the potential flooding. Flooding can occur as streams and rivers overflow their banks or any time there is rainfall with significant duration and intensity. Floods may develop slowly or as flash floods in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain. Additionally, floods can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states.

To minimize the likelihood of flooding and reduce the impacts on people, property, and the environment in the event of a flood, residents are encouraged to keep the following safety tips in mind:

Before a Flood

- 🛡️ Know the terms used to describe flooding.
 - Flood Watch - Flooding is possible. Watches are issued 12 to 36 hours in advance of a possible event.
 - Flash Flood Watch - Flash Flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground. A Flash Flood could occur without warning.
 - Flood Warning - Flooding is occurring, or will occur soon. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
 - Flash Flood Warning - A flash flood is occurring. Seek higher ground immediately.
- 🛡️ Ask local officials whether your property is in a flood-prone or high-risk area.
- 🛡️ Identify dams in your area and determine if they pose a hazard to you.
- 🛡️ Elevate your furnace, water heater, and electric panel to higher floors if they are susceptible to flooding.
- 🛡️ Install 'check valves' in sewer traps to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains in your home.
- 🛡️ Monitor media reports.
- 🛡️ Ensure your home is ready. Minimize damage from basement flooding by elevating utilities, and materials that could be damaged by limited basement flooding.
- 🛡️ Bring children's toys, patio and lawn furniture indoors.



During a Flood

- 🛡️ Monitor stream and urban street flooding. For those living in areas that are prone to localized flooding, closely watch small streams and low-lying areas for early flooding. Make sure street catch basins are cleared.
- 🛡️ Heed evacuation requests. Follow recommended evacuation routes; shortcuts may be blocked or dangerous.
- 🛡️ Do not walk through flowing water. Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths. Most of these drownings occur during flash floods. Six inches of swiftly moving water can knock you off of your feet. If you must walk through a flooded area, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still there and solid, even where the water is not flowing.
- 🛡️ Do not drive through flooded areas. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Cars can be swept away in just 2 feet of moving water. Do not drive around road barriers. They are there for a reason. The road or bridge may be washed out or structurally unsound.
- 🛡️ Avoid power lines and electrical wires. Electrocutation is also a major killer in floods. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to your utility company or local Emergency Manager.
- 🛡️ Look before you step. After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris, including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.
- 🛡️ Be alert for gas leaks. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Do not smoke or use candles, lanterns or open flames unless you are sure that the gas has been turned off and the area has been aired out.

After a Flood

- 🛡️ Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Listen to the media and do not return home until authorities indicate that it is safe to do so.
- 🛡️ Avoid floodwaters. The water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewerage.
- 🛡️ Wash hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with floodwaters.
- 🛡️ Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- 🛡️ Before returning to a building, inspect for cracks or other damage. When entering, use extreme caution, making sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.
- 🛡️ Until local authorities proclaim your water supply safe, boil water for drinking and food preparation vigorously for five minutes before using.
- 🛡️ Flooded buildings should be pumped out and disinfected. Pump out basements gradually, about 1/3 per day, to avoid structural damage. After the water is pumped out, solid wastes should be disposed of in a functioning sewage disposal system or sealed in plastic bags for disposal in an approved landfill. All flooded floor and wall surfaces should be washed with a solution of two capfuls of household bleach for each gallon of water. Carpeting, mattresses and upholstered furniture should be disposed of or cleaned and disinfected by a professional cleaner.
- 🛡️ Throw away food that has come in contact with floodwaters.
- 🛡️ Listen to news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.