

FLOOD RISK & PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS General Information



Background

- Flooding is a common, naturally occurring event in B.C.
- Unusually high snowpacks naturally raise the risk of future flooding
- The rate at which snowpacks melt in the spring may determine flood risk
- Rain, coupled with warm weather and snow melt, increases the risk of flooding
- Flood risk is determined by a number of factors
- 1999 was a record snowpack year with no significant flooding along the Fraser River in the Fraser Valley. However, in 1948 the Lower Fraser Valley flood affected thousands of residents and impacted infrastructure such as bridges and roads in a normal snowpack year
- Serious floods have also hit settlements on the upper Fraser, in the northwest and other parts of B.C.
- Flooding can impact a neighbourhood, or affect entire river basins, multiple communities and First Nations
- The Fraser River has reached flood stage 25 times in the last 100 years.

Precautions to Take

Before a flood:

- Know if you live in a flood-risk area
- Prepare personal emergency supply kits for your home, car and work (plan for at least a three-day supply of food and water for each family member)
- Have a grab-and-go kit ready if you have to leave your home quickly
- Keep important papers in watertight containers and have a record of your valuables in a safe place
- If flooding is likely in your area, pay attention to the local media for information
- Watch for warning signs: increase in height and intensity of water flows, mudslides, debris in creeks, colour changes in water or leaning trees
- Know that banks of rivers and streams may be unstable and dangerous
- Teach your children about flood safety
- Consider arrangements for your pets and any livestock
- Check on elderly or disabled neighbours to ensure they are aware of the situation
- Go to www.pep.bc.ca for personal emergency preparedness information

If rising waters threatens your property:

- If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture; move essential items and any hazardous materials such as cleaners or pesticides to an upper floor or away from area
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves and unplug electrical items
- Prepare for the possibility of evacuation
- Natural gas safety information is available at www.fortisbc.com/NaturalGas/GasSafety/EmergencyPreparedness/Pages/Floods.aspx

If you must evacuate :

- Always follow the instructions of local emergency officials
- Take your personal emergency grab-and-go kit with you along with important papers/documents
- Ensure each family member has waterproof clothing and footwear
- Lock all doors and windows and double check to ensure gas, electricity and water are shut off
- If you are evacuating your premises, shut off your gas valve at the meter. You can turn your gas off at the main shut-off valve on the inlet pipe next to your gas meter. Once the gas is shut off at the meter, don't turn it back on yourself
- Know how to turn off your gas meter: www.fortisbc.com/NaturalGas/SafetyHomeWork/CareOfYourMeter/Pages/How-to-turn-off-your-meter.aspx
- Take extra care when driving; familiar roads may look dramatically different when flooded
- If you are planning to travel, check road conditions at Drive BC www.drivebc.ca
- Do not walk through moving water. Less than 15 cm (six inches) of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, go where the water is not moving and watch for tripping hazards
- Do not drive into flooded areas. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away
- In the event of an evacuation, make sure to register at the reception centre
- Keep disaster response routes clear

Following a flood:

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the water supply is safe to drink. Your local Health Authority will release Boil Water Advisories as necessary. Find your local Health Authority at <http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/socsec/index.html>
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated or may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals
- Do not turn on electrical switches or wet electrical equipment unless okayed by an electrician
- To avoid a health hazard from eating food contaminated with flood waters, or left in an unplugged fridge or freezer – *if in doubt, throw it out*. Contamination can spoil foods and medicines, making them dangerous to consume
- Contact your insurance and utility companies
- Access the *One Step at a Time Disaster Recovery Guide* www.pep.gov.bc.ca/floods/docs/recoveryguide.pdf