

The information below is from a publication, "Consumers & Catastrophes: Understanding the Impact to You, Your Family, and Your Utilities," prepared by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' (NARUC) Committee on Consumers and the Public Interest. Download the free NARUC consumer guide.



Floods

Utilities prepare for flooding and encourage their customers to prepare as well. Crews assist in maintaining drainage areas by removing weeds and debris that can impede water flow during storms. They also inspect and maintain drainage areas, pumps and generators, which are vital tools to removing water from streets and discharging storm water into local waterways. The main concern for utility customers is to keep your family safe during flooding. Here is some information to help you and your family in flood preparation.

How it Might Impact Your Utility Service

Flooding is one of the most common hazards in the United States, causing more damage than any other severe weather-related event. It can occur from tropical storms, hurricanes, swollen rivers, heavy rains, tidal surges, spring snowmelt, levee or dam failure, local drainage issues, and water distribution main breaks.

- In cases where flood water is nearing or has already reached electrical equipment, the utility must turn off service in that area—usually at a substation—as a safety precaution.
- Impacts to drinking water and wastewater utilities can include loss of power, damage to assets, and dangerous conditions for personnel.



ALERTS

The National Weather Service (NWS) provides automatic weather alerts and warnings over the radio and TV, but it doesn't send e-mail or SMS alerts. This can be a problem if you didn't evacuate and you're left with nothing but a phone. For flooding-specific information, see [Flood Information on the NWS website](#).

BEFORE A FLOOD/HEAVY RAINS

- Know types of flood risk in your area. Visit FEMA's Flood Map Service Center for information.
- If flash flooding is a risk in your location, monitor potential signs, such as heavy rain.
- Learn and practice. See evacuation tips, shelter plans, and flash flood response at <http://bit.ly/2M3R9uL>.
- Gather supplies in case you have to leave immediately, or if services are cut off. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Don't forget the needs of pets. Obtain extra batteries and charging devices for phones and other critical equipment.
- Purchase or renew a flood insurance policy. It typically takes up to 30 days for a policy to go into effect and protect the life you've built. Homeowner's policies do not cover flooding. Get flood coverage under the National Flood Insurance Program <https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program> (NFIP).

- Protect your property. Move valuables to higher levels. Declutter drains and gutters. Install check valves.
- Check storm drains near your home and business and clear away leaves and debris. Clogged grates are often the reason a street floods during a storm.
- Inspect and clean sediment, debris, and rocks from driveways on your property, private roadway culverts, and swales. Culverts (pipes that carry storm water under a roadway) can get clogged and cause flooding. Property owners are responsible for maintenance of these private drainage systems. Clear debris and leaves from roof gutters and downspouts to protect your property.
- Install a sump pump. If you already own a sump pump, test it to make sure it will be in good working order if a storm hits. Consider a sump pump with a battery.
- Know how to shut off your electricity, gas, and water at main switches and valves. You may need to shut off these utilities if your home floods. As always, call your utilities for more information.

DURING A FLOOD/HEAVY RAINS

- Depending on where you are, and the impact and the warning time of flooding, go to the safe location that you identified previously.
- If told to evacuate, do so immediately. Never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of flooded areas.
- Unplug all electrical appliances and turn off gas at the meter. Move valuables to higher floors.
- Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. 'Turn Around. Don't Drown!'
- Stay away from fallen power lines and electrical wires. Assume any downed power line is an energized power line.

AFTER A FLOOD/HEAVY RAINS

The dangers are not over when the water goes down. Your home's foundation may have been weakened, the electrical system may have shorted out, and floodwaters may have left behind things that could make you sick. When in doubt, throw it out. Don't risk injury or infection.

- Listen to authorities for information and instructions. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Avoid driving, except in emergencies.
- Before re-entering your home, check for structural damage that could cause the building to collapse. Be cautious of potential gas leaks, electrical shorts, and live wires.
- If gas is suspected in the home, do not use a flashlight; the on/off switch could cause a spark and ignite the gas. Vacate the premises and call your utility.
- Be aware of the risk of electrocution. Whether inside or outside, do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. If it is safe to do so, turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock.

- Have a professional building inspector check your heating and gas systems, electrical panel, outlets, and appliances for safety before using. Call the gas company to have the gas turned back on.
- Avoid wading in floodwater, which can contain dangerous debris and be contaminated. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.
- Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machinery ONLY outdoors and away from windows.
- Contact your insurance agent for flood loss claims. Photograph and video damages and record repair costs.
- Apply for financial assistance. This is only available following a federal disaster declaration. Listen to the radio or television for updates on disaster assistance and registration procedures.

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