



Flooding

Fast Facts

- Fourteen people died as a result of driving across flooded roads in 2015, 11 of whom perished during the major flood in late December. This was the highest annual number of flood fatalities since records have been kept.
- Prolonged flooding from creeks and rivers and flash flooding from rain swollen roads and waterways are dangers that too many people ignore, sometimes with fatal consequences. Many flood-related rescues, injuries and fatalities have been the result of people in vehicles attempting to drive across flooded roads.
- The most dangerous type of flooding is a flash flood. Flash floods can sweep away everything in their path.
- Most flash floods are caused by slow-moving thunderstorms and occur most frequently at night.
- Flooding has been a factor in 49 deaths across Illinois since 1995. This is more than the number of people killed by tornadoes during the same period. Three out of four flood fatalities involved people in vehicles trying to cross flooded roads.



Before a Flood

- Know the terms used to describe flood threats:
 - Flood Watch: This means flooding or flash flooding is possible. Be extremely cautious when driving, especially at night. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or commercial television for additional information.
 - Flood Warning: This means flooding is occurring or will occur soon and is expected to occur for several days or weeks. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
 - Flash Flood Warning: This means a flash flood is occurring or is imminent. Many smartphones automatically receive flash flood warnings to alert you about flash flooding nearby, even if you are traveling. Flash flooding occurs very quickly, so take action immediately. NEVER drive across a flooded road, especially if the road is closed by barricades.
- Purchase a weather alert radio with a battery backup, a tone-alert feature and Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) technology that automatically alerts you when a watch or warning is issued for your county. Know the name of the county you live in and the counties you travel through.
- It is critical that someone at home, work or wherever people gather monitors weather conditions, regardless of the time of day. Monitor watches, warnings and advisories in your area using a weather alert radio, cell phone app, local TV, local radio or the Internet. If it is safe to do so, contact family members and friends when you become aware of a flooding situation that may threaten them.
- Check the weather forecast before leaving for extended outdoor periods and postpone plans if flooding is imminent or occurring.
- Make sure family members and friends know how to stay safe.
- Maintain an emergency supply kit. This kit will help your family cope during extended power outages. See page 10 for information on assembling your kit.
- Keep all of your important records and documents in a safe deposit box or another safe place away from the premises.
- Insure your property and possessions. Make an inventory of your possessions using paper lists, photographs and/or videotapes of your belongings. Give a copy to your insurance company. Update your inventory and review your coverage with your insurance company periodically.
- Consider purchasing flood insurance. Flood losses are not covered under homeowners insurance policies. Flood insurance is available in most communities through the National Flood Insurance Program. There is usually a period before it takes effect, so don't delay. Flood insurance is available whether the building is in or out of the identified flood-prone area. Call your insurance company for more information.
- Know how to shut off electricity, gas and water at main switches and valves. Know where gas pilots are located and how the heating system works.
- Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent flood waters from backing up in sewer drains. As a last resort, use large corks or stoppers to plug showers, tubs or basins.
- Consider measures for flood proofing your home. Call your local building department or emergency management agency for information.

During a Flood

- Monitor the radio, television or Internet for the latest weather information and evacuation instructions.
- If advised to evacuate, do so quickly.
- Evacuation is much simpler and safer before flood waters become too deep for ordinary vehicles.

- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Short cuts may be blocked.
- Move valuable household possessions to an upper floor or another location if flooding is imminent and time permits.
- If instructed to do so by local authorities, turn off utilities at their source.
- Many people have lost their lives by attempting to drive over flooded roadways. The speed and depth of the water is not always obvious. There may be a hidden portion of the roadway washed out under the water. Two feet of water will carry away most automobiles.



After a Flood

- Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. If you are evacuated, monitor radio or television news reports and do not return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.
- Monitor local radio or TV or contact your local emergency management agency for special information about where to go to get assistance for housing, clothing and food. Programs are available to help you cope with the stress of the disaster.
- Use extreme care in areas of downed power lines or natural gas leaks.
- If driving, be alert for hazards on the roadway.
- Check for injured victims. Render first aid if necessary. Do not attempt to move severely injured victims unless absolutely necessary. Wait for emergency medical assistance to arrive.
- When you are allowed to return, remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance.
- Stay alert in areas where flood waters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a vehicle. NEVER cross a flooded road or bridge in your vehicle.
- Stay out of buildings that remain in the flood waters.
- Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage. When entering buildings, use extreme caution. If your home was damaged, check the utilities.
- Look for fire hazards.
- Do not let children play in or near flood waters, flooded creeks or flood retention ponds. Swift water currents could sweep them away. Avoid coming in contact with flood waters. The water may be contaminated with oil, gasoline or raw sewage. Do not wade through a flooded stream to protect or retrieve belongings.
- Consider your family's health and safety. Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with flood waters. Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Throw away food that has come in contact with flood waters, including canned goods.
- Pump out flooded basements gradually, about one-third of the water per day, to avoid structural damage.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewer systems pose a health hazard.
- Do not make unnecessary telephone calls.
- Take photos or video of the damage to your home and property, and report it to the local emergency management agency.
- If unaffected by the flood, stay out of the area until local officials allow entry. Your presence may hamper emergency operations.

Emergency Supply Kit

A disaster of any kind may interfere with normal supplies of food, water, heat and other day-to-day necessities. It is important to keep a stock of emergency supplies on hand that will be sufficient to meet your family's needs for at least a three-day period.

It is important to update your kit regularly. You should replace the water supply and any food that may have reached its use-by or expiration date. An easy way to remember is to use Daylight Savings Time, so that when you change your clocks, you also update your kits.

An emergency supply kit should include the following:

- A battery-powered radio, weather alert radio and flashlights, with extra batteries
- Bottled drinking water: one gallon per day per person with at least a three-day supply for each person in your household
- At least a three-day supply of canned or sealed foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking
- First-aid kit and manual
- Non-electric can opener and utility knife
- Mess kits or other basic eating and cooking utensils
- Paper towels, toilet paper, soap and detergent
- Household laundry bleach (unscented)
- A blanket or sleeping bag for each member of the family
- One change of clothing and footwear per person
- Fire extinguisher
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Signal flare, matches and whistle
- Cell phone and car charger
- An extra set of car keys, credit card and cash
- A list of family physicians
- Medications or special foods needed by family members, such as insulin, heart medication, dietetic food and baby food. Do not store these items in your kit for a long period of time but add at the last minute.
- If needed, formula, diapers and bottles
- Denture needs, extra eye glasses and contact lens supplies
- You can store additional water by filling bathtubs and sinks with water if an emergency is declared. Clean water is also available in toilet tanks, presuming chemicals and other cleaning agents are not used in the water tank.

If you have pets, include the following items in your kit:

- Identification collar and rabies tag
- Pet carrier or cage
- Leash
- Medications
- Newspaper, litter and trash bags for waste
- Two-week supply of food and water
- Veterinary records (necessary if your pet has to go to a shelter)