

## **Flood waters can be extremely dangerous ...**

The force of six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet. The best protection during a flood is to leave the area and go to shelter on higher ground. Flash flood waters move at very fast speeds and can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings, and obliterate bridges. Walls of water can reach heights of 10 to 20 feet and generally are accompanied by a deadly cargo of debris. The best response to any signs of flash flooding is to move immediately and quickly to higher ground. Cars can be easily swept away in just 2 feet of moving water. If flood waters rise around a car, it should be abandoned. Passengers should climb to higher ground.

Communities particularly at risk are those located in low-lying areas, near water, or downstream from a dam. Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters, except fire. Most communities in Naples can experience some kind of flooding after spring rains or heavy thunderstorms.

Floods can be slow, or fast rising but generally develop over a period of days. Dam failures are potentially the worst flood events. A dam failure is usually the result of neglect, poor design, or structural damage caused by a major event such as an earthquake. When a dam fails, a gigantic quantity of water is suddenly let loose downstream, destroying anything in its path.

*Flash floods* usually result from intense storms dropping large amounts of rain within a brief period. Flash floods occur with little or no warning and can reach full peak in only a few minutes.

### **Precautions to Be Taken**

Find out if you live in a flood-prone area. Ask whether your property is above or below the flood stage water level and learn about the history of flooding for your region. Learn flood warning signs and your community alert signals. Request information on preparing for floods and flash floods. Contact the DPO and the American Red Cross for a copy of the community flood evacuation plan. This plan should include information on the safest routes to shelters. Individuals living in flash flood areas should have several alternative routes. Have disaster supplies on hand. See the [Disaster Supplies Kit](#) page.

**What to Do During a Flood** ❖ Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest storm information. Fill bathtubs, sinks, and jugs with clean water in case water becomes contaminated.

❖ Bring outdoor belongings, such as patio furniture, indoors. Move valuable household possessions to the upper floors or to safe ground if time permits.

❖ If you are instructed to do so by local authorities, turn off all utilities at the main switch and close the main gas valve. Be prepared to evacuate.

❖ Get your preassembled emergency supplies. If told to leave, do so immediately.

❖ If caught outdoors, climb to high ground and stay there. Avoid walking through any floodwaters. If it is moving swiftly, even water six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.

❖ If in caught in a car, turn around if you come to a flooded area and go another way. If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled vehicles.



### **Advice to Be Heeded During Evacuation**

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Evacuation is much simpler and safer before flood waters become too deep for ordinary vehicles to drive through. Listen to a battery-operated radio for evacuation instructions. Follow recommended evacuation routes - shortcuts may be blocked. Leave early enough to avoid being marooned by flooded roads.

### **What to Do After the Flood**

Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Listen to a radio or television and don't return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance like infants, elderly people, and people with disabilities. Other tips include:

- ❖ Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage. Stay out of buildings if flood waters remain around the building.
- ❖ When entering buildings, use extreme caution. Wear sturdy shoes and use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings. Examine walls, floors, doors, and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.
- ❖ Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes, that may have come into your home with the flood waters. Use a stick to poke through debris.
- ❖ Watch for loose plaster and ceilings that could fall. Take pictures of the damage, both of the house and its contents for insurance claims.
- ❖ Look for fire hazards. Broken or leaking gas lines; flooded electrical circuits; submerged furnaces or electrical appliances; and flammable or explosive materials coming from upstream.
- ❖ Throw away food, including canned goods, that has come in contact with flood waters.
- ❖ 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 sewage systems are health hazards.

### **How to Inspect Utilities in a Damaged Home**

*Check for gas leaks.* If you smell gas or hear blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned

back on by a professional.

*Look for electrical system damage.* If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician for advice.

*Check for sewage and water lines damage.* If you suspect sewage lines are damaged avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid the water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

<http://www.weather.gov/os/water/tadd/tadd-intro.shtml>