



**Shropshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service

## Flooding advice for householders

When floodwater recedes it will leave a muddy deposit, which may contain sewerage and other contaminants. Previous experience with other floods has shown that risk to health is very small. However risk to health can be reduced further by taking the following precautions which will also help to restore your home to good order.

### **Floodline Warnings Direct**

Floodline Warnings Direct is a free service that gives you advance warning of flooding in your area. The warning is issued as an automated message that can be received by your home phone, mobile phone, email, pager and fax. You can find out more information or sign up for this free service by calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188 or by [downloading the leaflet](#).

### **A flood in your home may be caused by various sources:**

- Burst water pipes
- Flooding during heavy storms causing overloading of sewers or drains
- Overland flooding due to high water table or more likely due to overloaded rivers and streams
- Flooding due to failure of tanks and reservoirs is unlikely

## **Flood warnings**

If you live in a flood risk area the Environment Agency will probably have issued you with flooding guidelines. These are the stages of flood warnings as issued by the agency:

1. **Stage 1 - Flood Watch:** flooding possible, beware, watch out!
2. **Stage 2 - Warning:** flooding is expected, likely to affect homes and businesses, act now!
3. **Stage 3 - Severe flood warning:** severe flooding expected, imminent danger to life and property, act now!
4. **Stage 4 - All clear:** an all clear will be issued when flood watches or warnings are no longer in force. Flood water levels receding. Check all is safe to return. Seek advice.

## **Fire Safety**

Flooding to adjacent roads to your property may delay the attendance of fire engines. It is therefore vitally important that you are especially vigilant during these periods. Pay particular attention to the following precautions:

- Check your smoke alarms are in working order
- Discuss your 'Fire Plan' with your family
- Ensure that all electrical equipment, which can be switched off, are switched off and disconnected at the mains supply prior to going to bed

## **Before you start**

Put your own safety first at all times.

- Avoid electrical shock, wear rubber boots. Keep electrical extension cables out of water. If you have any doubts about the safety of gas or electrical systems get professional advice.
- Make sure all electrical appliances are properly switched off before electricity is restored.

- If your fuse board or sockets have been submerged do not switch the power on until the system has been checked by an electrician.
- If your gas meter or any gas appliance has been submerged, contact the British Gas emergency freephone 0800 111 999 before switching the gas on or trying to light any appliance.
- Record details of any damage with photographs or video if possible.
- Contact your insurance company.
- Work out an action plan to: remove all water, mud and other debris. Rinse away contamination inside the house. Remove the rinse water, disinfect and dry out your home and salvageable possessions.
- Assemble equipment and supplies: ensure you have gloves, masks and other protective gear, buckets, mops, squeegees, plastic bags, bleach, detergent and also containers for soaking bedding and clothing, and lines to hang them to dry. You may also need to hire extension cables, submersible pumps, wet/dry vacuum cleaners, dehumidifiers or space heaters.
- Valuable papers that have been damaged should be stored in a freezer until you have time to work on them.

## **Cleaning your home**

Always use household gloves to protect your hands.

- Cover open cuts and wounds on exposed skin with waterproof plaster.
- Remove all soft furnishings and fittings that are damaged beyond repair.
- Remove dirty water and silt from the property including the space under the ground floor (if you have suspended floors). This space under the ground floor may need to be pumped out.
- Wash down all hard surfaces with hot soapy water until they look clean.
- Use a domestic disinfectant making sure you follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Food preparation surfaces, storage cupboards, refrigerators, etc., should have a final wash down with food-safe disinfectants.

- Allow all cleansed areas to thoroughly dry, this will also help to destroy any germs left behind.
- Heating and good ventilation will help with the drying process.

### **Clothing and bedding**

Clothing, bedding and other soft/fabric articles including children's toys should be washed at the highest temperature possible as indicated on the manufacturer's instructions. Other soft furnishings that cannot be put in the washing machine will have to be professionally cleaned - if this is not possible, dispose of the article.

### **Reoccupation of your home**

It is recommended that you only move back into affected rooms once the cleaning has been carried out. Be aware that further work may have to be carried out on the advice of your insurance company.

- Try and have some heating on at all times.
- The use of a dehumidifier is highly recommended.
- Ensure your home is well ventilated. Leave windows open as much as possible.
- Ensure that airbricks to any underfloor spaces are unblocked to ensure a free flow of air.

### **Preparation of food**

Surfaces that food may come into contact with must be disinfected.

- If worktops show signs of flood damage do not use them.
- Ensure food storage shelves, including your refrigerator, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Ensure that all crockery, pots and pans are cleaned and washed with very hot water before use. Disinfectant can also be used. Chipped or damaged items should be thrown away.
- Ensure that water taps are cleaned and disinfected before use.

- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Dispose of **ALL** food that has come into contact with flood water. This includes tins as they may be contaminated with sewage or chemicals left from the flood water.
- Do not refreeze food which has been thawed out. Throw away any defrosted food.
- Remember - for insurance purposes, keep a list of all food that you throw away.

### **General advice**

- If you feel unwell, go immediately to your doctor. Tell him that your home was flooded.
- Any dust from drying out should be continuously vacuumed up.
- It is advisable that young children should not play directly on wooden floorboards, damaged tiled floors and affected grassed or paved areas until they have been thoroughly dried out.
- Don't eat garden or allotment produce that has been in contact with flood water.
- Any areas showing signs of mould should be treated with a fungicidal solution.
- Seek advice from your insurance company about any repair/replacement work you think is necessary.

