



March 2021

## Flooding: Watch or Warning?

Pennsylvania residents and visitors enjoy our state's stunning natural scenery and beautiful scenic river systems. Many towns and cities in Pennsylvania were founded near a river or large creek banks.

Flooding is the most common natural disaster in Pennsylvania, destroying thousands of homes and costing billions of dollars each year.

Floods can occur in different ways. Some develop slowly during an extended period of rain or in a warming trend following heavy snow. Others, like flash floods, can happen very quickly, without any visible signs of rain. Even small streams and dry creek beds can overflow to produce flooding.



**If you receive a flood watch or warning, do you know what to do?**

The National Weather Service (NWS) will issue emergency broadcasts, also known as alerts, during severe weather. It is imperative to know what to do when you hear an alert.

Do you know the difference between a Flood Watch and a Flood Warning? A Watch means “Be Prepared!” A Warning means “Take Action Now!” Let’s dig into what you should know and what you should do.

[READ MORE](#)

**Don't Take A Chance**

What are the chances it will flood where you live, work, and play?

Floods are Pennsylvania’s most common natural disaster.

Floods are not all the same and not created equal.

Some floods develop slowly, while others, such as flash floods, can develop in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain. Flash floods can

actually occur within a few minutes or hours of excessive rainfall, a dam or levee failure or a sudden release of water held by an ice jam.

The most common type of flooding is overland flooding. Overland flooding typically occurs when waterways such as rivers or streams overflow their banks due to rainwater. It can also occur when rainfall or snowmelt exceeds the capacity of underground pipes or streets and drains designed to carry flood water away from urban areas.



Areas more susceptible to flooding are low-lying areas, near water, behind a levee, or downstream from a dam. Even small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds, or the low-lying ground that isn't at regular risk for flooding can flood.

There are many steps you should take to prepare for floods. The first step is to Know Your Risk! Since flooding can occur anywhere it rains, it is important to understand the weather where you live and work and how the weather could impact you and your loved ones.

## Preparing For A Flood

There are many things you can do to prepare for a flood. You can start by making an evacuation plan and sign up for emergency alerts.

Making an emergency plan in conjunction with your evacuation plan is very important. Start your plan by identifying three places to meet family and friends in the event of an emergency: one in your neighborhood, one in your town, and one out-of-town.

Make sure that all locations are in higher elevation and offer protection from the elements. Learn and practice how you will get to your out-of-town location; determine your evacuation routes.

Write down information on important places like work, schools, daycares, houses of worship, doctor's offices, hospitals, etc. Make sure you consider everyone's needs, such as any medical concerns, communications, etc. Don't forget to include your pets in your plan as well. Share contact information with everyone (friends, family and out-of-town contacts).

There are other important things to do. To prepare for and protect against a flood, you should:

- Build an emergency kit.
- Make a family communications plan.
- Avoid building in a flood plain, unless you elevate and reinforce your home.



- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel in your home if you live in an area with high flood risk.
- Consider installing "check valves" to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home.
- If feasible, construct barriers to stop floodwater from entering the building and seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds.

The question to ask yourself is, Are you Floodsmart? Flooding is not typically covered under renter and homeowner's insurance policies. Talk to your insurance provider about your policy and consider additional coverage. You can learn about the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and start preparing today.

Remember, there is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance goes into effect, so consider purchasing it NOW!

## What To Do During A Flood

Listen to the radio, television or your weather radio for information and important updates. If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:

- Secure your home. Move essential items to the upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so.
- Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical



- equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- When you evacuate, do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you must walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

If you are driving, do not attempt to drive through a flooded road. The depth of water is not always obvious. The roadbed may be washed out under the water and you could end up stranded or trapped. Only six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling. A foot of water can cause vehicles to float. Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including, SUVs and pick-ups.

If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground where water is not moving or is not more than a few inches deep. You and the vehicle can be swept away quickly. If your vehicle is trapped in rapidly moving water, get out quickly and seek refuge on the roof.

Here are some more don'ts:

- Don't drive around a barricade. Barricades are there for your protection. Turn around and go another way.
- Don't try to take shortcuts. They may be blocked. Stick to the designated evacuation routes.
- Don't camp or park your vehicle along streams, rivers or creeks, particularly during threatening conditions.

If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move IMMEDIATELY to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.

Visit [Ready PA](#) for more information about flooding.

## Basic SkyWarn Spotter Training

Do you want to learn more about the weather?

Then, here's your chance to become an official storm spotter.

The National Weather Service in State College will be offering virtual

opportunities for training to help locate and provide valuable reports on weather impacting Pennsylvania. Learn to measure snow, report severe hail, wind damage and tornadoes. Sign up today for one of the offerings in March or early April 2021. It's free and online!



**BASIC SKYWARN TRAINING**  
VIRTUAL TALK SCHEDULE: SPRING 2021

Monday March 15 <sup>th</sup>	6:30PM – 8:30PM
Tuesday March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	10AM – 12PM
Saturday March 27 <sup>th</sup>	10AM – 12PM
Tuesday March 30 <sup>th</sup>	7PM – 9PM
Thursday April 1 <sup>st</sup>	7PM – 9PM

For more information & to register, visit:  
[www.weather.gov/ctp/SpotterTalks](http://www.weather.gov/ctp/SpotterTalks)

Logos: SkyWarn, National Weather Service, State College - PA

MARCH TIP SHEET: WINTER WEATHER FLOOD RISKS

MARCH SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

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