

What to do before, during and after a flood

Practical advice on what to do to protect yourself and your property

If you need help to understand this information in another language please call **08456 066 067**.

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo.	Portuguese
Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.	Polish
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如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。	Chinese
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"Over 5.5 million properties in England and Wales are at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water. That's one in six – which means there is a high chance one of these properties is your home or business."

National Flood Forum

We are the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership, comprising Suffolk county and district councils, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit and other flood management agencies.

Suffolk County Council's role is to lead this partnership, make you aware of the risk of surface water or 'flash' flooding and co-ordinate the various organisations involved in dealing with this type of flooding.

The Environment Agency's role is to make people aware of flooding from rivers and the sea, provide flood warning for these sources and to build and maintain flood defences.

We have worked in partnership to produce this leaflet which contains useful information to help you reduce the effects of flooding on you and your property.

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Useful information

Environment Agency

Website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

0845 988 1188

For information on surface water risk in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council

Website: www.suffolk.gov.uk/floodrisk

Email: floods@suffolk.gov.uk

For weather and travel information contact

Met Office

Website: www.metoffice.gov.uk

0870 900 0100

For general insurance queries

The Association of British Insurers

Website: www.abi.org.uk

020 7600 3333

For flood products and services

National Flood Forum (Blue Pages)

Website: www.floodforum.org.uk

01299 403 055

Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit

Website: www.suffolkresilienceforum.onesuffolk.net/suffolk-joint-emergency-planning-unit-jepu/

Email: emergency.planning@suffolk.gov.uk

01473 265332

British Red Cross

Website: www.redcross.org.uk

0844 871 1111

Fire safety advice

Website: www.suffolk.gov.uk/emergency-and-safety/fire-and-rescue-service/prevention-community-fire-safety/guidance/fire-safety-information-leaflets/

01473 260588

Important! Always use reputable building contractors. Beware bogus trade people calling door-to-door. Always check references and do not pay in advance.

Flood repairs can take weeks or months to complete, especially if there has been widespread flooding and builders are scarce. It takes time to dry out a property and some buildings may have to be gutted before repairs can start.

If this is the case, ask your insurance company or landlord if they will provide you with temporary accommodation.

How do you know if you are at risk of flooding?

The Environment Agency can advise you if you are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea, and can provide a free 24-hour flood warning service. To check the risk where you live, go to the Environment Agency website, or phone **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188**.

However...

The likelihood of surface water or flash flooding is harder to predict. This happens where drainage systems are unable to cope with heavy spells of rainfall. Suffolk County Council can supply some information to help you understand the risk in your area, but it is not possible to predict accurately where heavy rain is likely to fall and thus we cannot give you a direct warning for this type of flooding. Local weather forecasts will give you the best indication of whether surface water flooding is likely or not.

To help you understand the risk of flooding in your area, make sure you understand the different types of flooding that may affect you. If in doubt, ask Suffolk County Council or the Environment Agency.

Flood warnings

The Environment Agency provides a free flood warning service to many areas at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.

Call **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188** or visit the Environment Agency website to find out if you can sign up for the free 24 hour Floodline Warnings Direct service, get practical advice on what to do before, during and after flooding and to get a Quickdial number for easy access to information on flooding in your area.

You can select to receive these warnings by phone, text, email, fax or pager.

Make sure that you use a combination of methods, to ensure that you receive the warning at home, work or on the move.

Severe Weather Warnings from the Met Office

You can also get warnings about severe weather from local weather, news and travel bulletins on TV and the local radio stations and the Met Office website. These will be especially useful in areas at risk of surface water.

Localised flooding incidents

Heavy rain storms can result in localised flooding affecting just a few properties and we need to know about it. If this is the case, please give us details by completing the form on www.suffolk.gov.uk/floodrisk (look under 'Investigating Flooding'). Your report will help us to understand which areas are most at risk from this type of flooding and target our activities to help you accordingly.

And remember – even if water does not enter your home, you could be affected by local flooding. You may lose power if nearby substations are flooded and become trapped as roads around you become impassable.

Local councils will usually provide skips and extra rubbish collections for items that your insurance company has agreed you can throw away.

Make sure to discard all food items that have come into contact with flood water. DO NOT eat any produce from allotments affected by flood water – throw it away.

Consult the Environment Agency's ***Flooding in Gardens booklet***.

Making an insurance claim

In almost all cases the insurance company will send a loss adjuster to look at your property. They will confirm what repairs and replacements are needed and covered by your policy.

If you rent your property, contact your landlord and your contents insurance company as soon as possible.

If you do not have insurance, your local district council may be able to provide information on hardship grants or charities that may be able to help you after a flood.

If flooding has caused damage to large parts of the country, you may have to wait for a loss adjuster to visit you.

Ask the insurance company

- How long it will be before the loss adjuster visits.
- If you are to clean your property or if they will get a company to do it for you.

Always make your own record of flood damage

- Mark on the wall the height the flood water got to. Photograph or video your damaged property. List the damage to your property and belongings.

Things to help with your insurance claim

Confirm the insurance company will pay for any service or equipment you need.

Make a note of all telephone calls. Record the date, name and what was agreed, dealing with an insurance claim.

Keep copies of all letters, emails and faxes you send and receive. Keep receipts.

Don't throw anything away until told (except ruined food) – the insurance company may only offer to clean and repair something, not replace it.

As you plan your property repairs, you might want to think about ways to protect it from future flooding.

3. Recovering from a flood

First steps

If you have been evacuated from your home, don't return until you are told it is safe to do so by the police or emergency services.

Take care as there may be hidden dangers in the flood water like sharp objects, raised manhole covers and pollution.

Flood water could have caused structural damage to your property.

If it is safe to do so, take pictures of the damage inside your house.

Cleaning up

There are a number of things to be aware of when clearing up after a flood:

Flood water can contain sewage, chemicals and animal waste. Always wear waterproof outerwear, including gloves and wellington boots.

You can clean and disinfect your property using ordinary household products.

If your electricity supply is not already switched off at the mains, get a qualified person to do this. DO NOT touch sources of electricity when standing in flood water.

Before using any electrical appliances at home, get them checked by a professional electrician or gas plumber – including heating systems.

You can get water out of your property using a pump and generator. Position the generator outside in the open air as generators produce carbon monoxide fumes which can kill. Do not pump out water until water levels outside your property are lower than inside. This reduces the risk of structural damage.

Shovel mud away evenly from both sides of a wall as this stops pressure building up on one side.

A garden hose is useful for washing down. DO NOT use high-pressure hoses as they blast contaminated matter into the air. Make sure that you protect your eyes with safety glasses as flood water contain harmful products.

If you are drying your property naturally, keep doors and windows open as much as possible. If using dehumidifiers, close external doors and windows.

If you have gas or oil central heating and it has been checked by an engineer, turn it on.

Keep the thermostat between 20-22 degrees centigrade for steady drying.

1. Prepare for flooding

Start preparing today before a flood happens

Use this checklist as your personal flood plan:

- a) Know who to contact and how
 - Agree where you will go and how to contact each other.
 - Keep a list of all your important contacts to hand.
- b) Think about who you could ask for help / who you could offer to help, particularly vulnerable neighbours or relatives, in a flood.
- c) Think about what you can move now
 - Don't wait for a flood. Keep important documents, and irreplaceable items of personal value in a safe place.
- d) Think about what you would want to move to safety during a flood
 - Pets (evacuation centres will allow pets under control)
 - Cars
 - Electrical equipment – unplug and move computers and TV
 - Garden pot plants, furniture, and garden equipment from sheds
- e) Check your insurance cover
 - Check your buildings and contents insurance policy.
 - Confirm you are covered for flooding.
 - Find out if the policy replaces new for old, and if it has a limit on repairs.
 - Don't underestimate the value of your contents.
- f) Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water mains supplies
 - Mark taps or switches with stickers to help you remember.
 - If unsure ask the next time you have the meter checked
- g) Prepare a flood kit of essential items and keep it handy. It should include
 - Copies of your home insurance documents.
 - A torch with spare batteries or a wind-up torch.
 - A wind-up or battery radio.
 - Warm, waterproof clothing and blankets.
 - A first aid kit and prescription medication.
 - Bottled water and non-perishable foods.
 - Baby food and baby care items
 - Your list of useful contact numbers plus 'Z-cards' (SOS Cards) available from all council offices and major libraries in Suffolk.
 - If in the event of leaving your home don't forget spare keys and your wallet/purse/ any daily medication (inhaler, etc)

Your useful contact numbers

Fill this out and keep this leaflet and keep it with your flood kit

Don't forget to charge up your mobile phone!

Environment Agency Floodline	0845 988 1188
Quickdial number (you will receive this in the phone/text message you receive with your flood warning)	
Local authority emergency helpline	
Insurance 24-hour number and policy number	
Local radio for news alerts & weather updates	
Who can help? Family / neighbours/ carer	
Work phone numbers	
School/ Nursery	
Local police station	
Vet/kennel/cattery	
Gas supplier and meter number	
Electricity supplier and meter number	
Water supplier and meter number	
Electrician	
Plumber	
Builder	

Important! Flood water is dangerous

Six inches of fast-flowing water can knock over an adult and two feet of water can move a car.

Avoid walking, cycling or driving through flood water – there maybe hidden objects or open manholes under the water.

Keep children and vulnerable people away from it.

Wash your hands thoroughly if you touch it – it maybe contaminated with sewage.

If you take unnecessary risks, like driving along a flooded road when you don't know how deep it is and getting stuck, you add to the burden on the emergency services and may put other lives at risk.

2. What to do to stay safe in a flood

In the event of a flood focus on the safety of you and your family

Call 999 if anyone is in danger or requires urgent rescue

In normal circumstances it is not Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service policy to pump out flooded premises

Be sure you know what to do when you receive a flood warning. Call **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188** if you need information. Cooperate with the emergency services if they tell you to evacuate your home. Be prepared to act quickly and get yourself to safety.

What to do in an emergency

Follow these simple steps to stay safe:

- Check in with other people in your household – if they are not at home make sure they are somewhere safe.
- Gather essential items together either upstairs or in a high place.
- Fill jugs and saucepans with clean water.
- Move your family and pets upstairs, or to a high place with a means of escape.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies when flood water is about to enter your home if safe to do so. DO NOT touch sources of electricity when standing in flood water.
- Keep listening to local radio for updates or call **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188**.
- Check on vulnerable neighbours or relatives, if it is safe to do so.
- Flood water can rise quickly, stay calm and reassure those around you.
- Be careful using alternative heating, cooking or lighting equipment if power supplies fail – candles and portable gas equipment can cause fires if not properly used. Remember, flood waters may result in fire crews being delayed.

Flood and Weather Warnings

Know what they mean and what you need to do

Environment Agency warnings for river and sea flooding:

Sign up for the direct warning service on the Environment Agency website or contact **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188**

 <p>FLOOD ALERT</p>	<p>This means “Flooding is possible. Be prepared”. The Environment Agency issues Flood Alerts for specific locations that are at risk of flooding. It will indicate that flooding is possible and that people should make some low impact preparations (e.g. move small valuable items upstairs, check travel plans) and remain vigilant.</p>
 <p>FLOOD WARNING</p>	<p>This means that “Flooding is expected. Immediate action required”. Flood Warnings are generally targeted at specific communities that are at risk from flooding. Some Flood Warnings may apply to stretches of coast and river. It will indicate that flooding is expected and that people should take more direct impact actions e.g. move belongings upstairs, install flood protection products.</p>
 <p>SEVERE FLOOD WARNING</p>	<p>This means “Severe Flooding. Danger to life”. Anyone who receives a Flood Warning will receive a Severe Flood Warning if conditions are met. It will be used in extreme circumstances to tell people that flooding is posing significant risk to life or significant disruption to communities which could also cause risk to life. Depending on the circumstances it would indicate that people should evacuate the area or take shelter within safe buildings.</p>
<p>Warning No Longer In Force</p>	<p>The Environment Agency issues a message to tell people that the flood threat has passed and includes useful advice on what to do next.</p>

Severe weather warnings:

Weather warnings are issued by the Met Office and relayed via TV, weather forecast updates, radio stations and on the website. They are colour coded depending on a combination of the likelihood of the heavy rainfall happening and the resulting surface water flooding it may cause.

Severe weather alerts (yellow) are issued more than 24 hours ahead.

Severe weather warnings (orange/red) are issued no more than 24 hours ahead (due to the unpredictability of weather systems) and are updated regularly.

	No severe weather
	Be aware
	Be prepared
	Take action

BE AWARE This means there is a risk of localised flooding of low lying fields, recreational land and car parks; flooding of a small number of homes and businesses; water on roads maybe leading to difficult driving conditions especially in known trouble spots; local disruption to travel.

BE PREPARED This means that some flooding of homes, businesses and transport links is possible; disruption to travel is likely; disruption to gas, electricity, water supplies and telecoms is possible and some evacuations may be required.

Be prepared to protect yourself and your property.

TAKE ACTION If you see this weather warning, expect widespread flooding of property; severe disruption to travel. loss of gas, electricity, water supplies and significant disruption to communities. Evacuation should be expected. There is a significant risk to life. **Take action to protect yourself and follow the advice of the emergency services.**

If there has been an alert in your area, **keep monitoring local weather forecasts or the Met Office website.**

Check back a page and make sure you understand the difference between a Severe Weather Warning and a Flood Warning from the Environment Agency.

Steps to protect your property

There are many things you can do to your property that will help to keep the flood water out and make it easier and cheaper to clean up after a flood.

Flood protection equipment can help stop flood water getting into your property. Follow manufacturer instructions to put these in place when you get a flood warning.

Temporary flood protection equipment

Traditionally, sandbags were used to try to keep flood water from entering properties. They cannot be stored in advance as they degrade, and following a flood maybe difficult to dispose of due to contamination by sewage in the water. They need costly specialist removal.

A much better option is to use temporary flood protection for your home. You can get more information about flood protection equipment on the Environment Agency or National Flood Forum websites. Some examples are listed below:

Floodboards: These fix to frames around windows and doors. They can be washed, stored and used again.

Airbrick covers: These can stop flood water coming in through your airbricks.

Non-return valves which can be fitted on drains, water inlet and outlet pipes.

If you don't have non-return valves fitted, try to disconnect equipment that uses water (like washing machine, dishwasher) and weigh down toilet seats and plugs in sinks/baths with heavy objects to prevent water coming into your house this way.

Put temporary flood protection measures in place as soon as you get a flood warning – or before if you aren't likely to be a home at the time. Always remove flood protection equipment once the flood water has gone. This will help your property dry out.

Reducing the effect of flood water on your property

If your property is prone to regular flooding there are a number of improvements you can make so it will be easier and cheaper to clean up after a flood. These include:

- lay tiles and use rugs on the ground floor rather than fitted carpets
- raise the level of electrical sockets to at least 1.5m above ground floor level
- use lime plaster instead of gypsum on walls
- replace wooden window frames and doors with synthetic ones.

See the Environment Agency website for more information.