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## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY MUSCATINE COUNTY

### PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## TIPS ON WHAT TO DO BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A FLOOD

*Do not delay flood preparations, spring river flooding will soon be here*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** - Tips on what to do before, during, and after a flood.

### **Before a flood**

- Find out if you live in a flood-prone area from your local emergency management office.
- Learn flood warning signs and your community alert signals.
- Request information from your local emergency management office on preparing for floods and flash floods.
- Have check valves installed in building sewer traps to prevent floodwaters from backing up in sewer drains. As a last resort, use large corks or stoppers to plug showers, tubs, or basins.
- Plan and practice an evacuation route. Contact your **local emergency management office** 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.
- Develop a family emergency communication plan.
- Learn about the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**. Ask your insurance agent about flood insurance. Most homeowner's policies do not cover flood damage.
- Catalog your belongings. Take photos of rooms, furniture, books, appliances, computer equipment, DVDs, and other items of value. Keep your catalog or inventory list in a safe place.

### **During a flood watch**

- Pay attention to the news, and know 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 evacuate by local authorities, do so, and turn off all utilities at the main switch and close the main gas valve.
- Be prepared to evacuate.

### **During a flood**

#### **If Indoors**

- Turn on battery-operated radio or television to get the latest emergency information.
- Get your pre-assembled emergency supplies.
- If told to leave, do so immediately.

#### **If 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 a car**

- If you come to a flooded area, turn around and go another way. Turn around, don't drown.
- If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled vehicles.

## **During an 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 trapped by flooded roads.

## **After a flood**

### **Assessing the Situation**

- Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to recede. Don't return home until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.
- Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance: infants, elderly people, and people with disabilities.
- Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage.
- Stay out of buildings if floodwaters 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 the building is not in danger of collapsing.
  - Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into your home with the floodwaters. Use a stick to poke through debris.
  - Watch for loose plaster and ceilings that could fall.
  - Take pictures of the damage--both to 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
  - Flammable or explosive materials coming from upstream
- Throw away food - including canned goods - that has been exposed to 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.

### **Inspecting utilities in a damaged home**

- **Check for gas leaks.** If you smell gas or hear a 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 line 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.

For more information on flood preparedness, visit [www.beready.iowa.gov](http://www.beready.iowa.gov).