

1.1 **Flood**

Flood Watch means that there is the possibility of flooding. **Flood Warning** means that flooding has begun or is imminent.

A flood is defined as an overflow of water onto an area of land that is normally dry. In the Plateau communities, floods generally occur from natural causes such as a wet or rainy spring with heavy rainfall. Floods can also occur from human causes such as a dam impoundment bursting. A dam break is usually associated with intense rainfall or prolonged flood conditions. In the Riverside County area, an earthquake can also cause dam failure. The greatest threat to people and property is normally in areas immediately below the dam since flood discharges decrease as the flood wave moves downstream. Flash floods can develop quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water that carries rocks, mud, and other debris and can sweep away most things in its path. Flooding can also occur when a dam breaks or if community water tanks rupture, producing effects similar to flash floods.

Floods are generally classed as either slow-rise or flash floods. Slow-rise floods may be preceded by a warning time lasting from hours to days, or possibly weeks. Evacuation and sandbagging for a slow-rise flood may lessen flood related damage. Conversely, flash floods are the more difficult to prepare for because of the short or no warning time. Occasionally in desert areas, adequate warning may not be possible. Flash flood warnings can require immediate evacuation.

Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live, but especially if you live in a low-lying area. Even very small streams, gullies, dry streambeds or low-lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood. Be cautious when near or crossing streams, flood control channels or flooded intersections. Every state is at risk from this hazard. Use the following information and suggestions to help reduce your risk of death, injury and property losses from flooding wherever you live, work and play.

As with any disaster, you will want to have a Family Emergency Plan in place, a First Aid Kit on hand, a sufficient supply of water and your “Go-Bags” (See section 2.2 and 2.3 for details). SRPET suggests the following tips to be prepared for a flood disaster.

1.1.1 **Flood Insurance**

Damage and other flooding losses are not covered by most homeowners’ insurance. However, FEMA offers special flood insurance through its National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Contact your insurance agent or call FEMA at (800) 638-6620 or visit www.fema.gov for more information or contact Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District at 951-955-1200 or at <http://www.floodcontrol.co.riverside.ca.us/>.

1.1.2 **Before the Flood Checklist**

Take the following actions before the rains and flooding begin:

- Check with your local public works, building or planning department to see if you live in an area subject to flooding
- Clear debris and overgrowth from culverts, drainage ditches and creeks
- Work with neighbors to solve potential drainage problems and to avoid diverting debris onto their properties (consult a licensed civil engineer if you’re in doubt)

1.1.3 During a Flood Checklist

- Relocate valuables from lower to upper floors
- Be prepared to move to a safe area before flood waters cut off access
- Disconnect all electrical appliances or turn off electric circuits at the fuse panel or circuit breaker panel before evacuating
- Do not drive or walk through moving water (you can be knocked off your feet in as little as six inches of water)
- Stay away from streams, flood control channels and other areas subject to sudden flooding
- Move to higher ground if you are caught by rising waters
- Use the phone only to report dangerous conditions or emergencies that are life threatening

1.1.4 After the Flood Checklist

- Report damaged utilities to the appropriate agencies - maintain a safe distance from downed power lines and broken gas lines; immediately report them to the appropriate utility
- Listen to the radio or watch television for information and instructions from local officials
- Do not use fresh or canned foods that have come in contact with floodwaters
- Follow the instructions of local officials regarding the safety of drinking water – boil water for 10 minutes or purify water if you are in doubt - test well water before drinking
- Do not enter disaster areas
- Stay away from live electrical equipment in wet areas - check electrical equipment or appliances that have been in contact with water before using them
- Use flashlights, rather than lanterns, candles or matches, to check on the condition of buildings (flammable conditions may be present)

1.1.5 Health Tip

Avoid floodwaters. Keep contact time with floodwaters to a minimum. Keep all children and pets out of floodwaters. The water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage. It is especially important to keep the water out of your mouth, eyes and nose. Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you are exposed to floodwaters.