



Earth Gauge

A National Environmental Education Foundation Program

Flood Safety Awareness Week

Flooding can happen anywhere in the U.S., at any time of year! National Flood Safety Awareness Week takes place from March 17-21 to highlight important flood-related topics and tips. This year, the National Weather Service has identified flood safety themes for each day of the week – please read on for more information about each topic.

MONDAY: ADVANCED HYDROLOGIC PREDICTION SERVICE (AHPS)

The NOAA Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service provides forecast information about the occurrence, magnitude, and uncertainty tied to water-related events – floods, droughts, and others – to help make decisions. For example, flood forecast maps and information about observed river levels may help local officials know when to evacuate citizens from a potential flood area. Learn more about AHPS: www.weather.gov/os/water/Ahps.shtml.



TUESDAY: TURN AROUND DON'T DROWN™ (TADD)

Turn Around Don't Drown™ is the National Weather Service campaign designed to warn people about the dangers of driving or walking through flood waters. According to National Weather Service, more people die each year from flooding than from any other severe weather event. And, more than half of flood-related deaths occur in a vehicle. Share these simple tips with your viewers, and remind them to "Turn Around Don't Drown!"

- Listen to your local media or NOAA Weather Radio for warnings about flooding and flash flooding.
- If flooding occurs, steer clear of low areas – ditches, canyons, culverts, washes, etc.
- Never walk or drive through a flooded area! Just six-inches of flowing water can knock you off your feet, and only two-feet of water can float a vehicle.
- Avoid camping or parking your car along stream or river banks.
- Stay alert when driving at night – it can be much harder to see washed-out roadways and flood waters in the dark.
- Learn more about the TADD Campaign: www.weather.gov/os/water/tadd/.

WEDNESDAY: FLOODS AND OTHER RELATED PHENOMENA

- **Tropical Cyclone Inland Flooding** – Heavy rainfall associated with hurricanes, typhoons, and tropical storms often causes more damage than high winds. As a matter of fact, nearly 60 percent of deaths associated with tropical cyclones in the U.S. since 1970 have been tied to inland flooding. Slow-moving storms can mean that heavy rains persist over one area, increasing the risk for flooding.
- **Snowmelt Flooding** – Snowpacks hold water, and when snow begins to melt, flooding can occur if the amount of snowmelt exceeds the capacity for soils and surface waters (rivers, lakes, streams) to store water. The Northeast, North Central and Western U.S. are particularly vulnerable to snowpack flooding, and eight of the most significant floods in the Twentieth Century were snowmelt-related.
- **Ice Jams** – In northern parts of the U.S., ice covers many lakes and rivers during the winter. Sometimes, as ice breaks up and flows downstream, it can pile up at obstructed areas (such as narrow parts of the river or bridges) and cause upstream flooding. Montana and New York have reported the most ice jams, followed by Pennsylvania and Minnesota.
- **Debris Flows** – After a wildfire, debris flows (mud flows) can be a serious risk. When rain falls on burned slopes, water can pick up speed quickly, carrying soils and rocks along the way. Debris flows can damage bridges, roadways, culverts, and buildings, and can cause injuries and death.
- **Flash Floods** – Flash flooding usually happens when heavy, localized rainfall causes water to rise rapidly in a low-lying area or stream. Flash floods can happen quickly and without warning, and are often the result of slowly-moving thunderstorms or multiple storms occurring in a short amount of time.

A Program of the National Environmental Education Foundation
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THURSDAY: FLOOD INSURANCE

In an area at risk for floods, there is a 26 percent chance that a flood will occur during the course of a 30-year mortgage, compared to only a nine percent chance of a fire! The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is designed to help protect communities from flood damage, and also provide people with flood insurance.

- Learn more about NFIP and your flood risk at www.floodsmart.gov.
- View flooding scenarios - snowmelt, flash flood, new development, dams/levees, and tropical storm – at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/your_flood_risk/flood_scenarios.jsp



FRIDAY: FLOOD SAFETY

These simple tips can help your viewers prepare for a flood, and take appropriate actions during and after a flooding event occurs.

Before A Flood...

- Develop a family disaster plan – learn what your flood risk is, find out how your community will warn you if a natural disaster occurs, and identify evacuation plans.
- Post emergency phone numbers and information in a central place in your home, and make sure family members know where to find them.
- Make sure smoke detectors and fire extinguishers work, and family members know how to use them.
- Gather emergency supplies – water, food, medications, first aid supplies, portable radio and batteries, and other necessary items – that will last for three days to one week.
- Keep important family documents in a water-proof and fire-resistant container to protect them.
- See *Avoiding Flood Damage: A Checklist for Homeowners* to learn about reducing the risk of flood damage in your home: www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/pdf/flood_damage.pdf.

During a Flood...

- Listen to local media or NOAA Weather Radio for important updates and information, and follow evacuation instructions given by local officials.



- Don't drive if you don't have to, and follow the safety tips provided by the Turn Around Don't Drown™ campaign (Tuesday's topic).
- Never allow children to play near storm drains, ditches, arroyos, or other areas subject to flooding.
- If floodwater is approaching, climb to higher ground.
- If you are preparing to evacuate and have time, move essential items to a higher floor in your home. Turn off utility main switches/valves if you are instructed to do so.
- Do not touch electrical equipment or wires if they are wet.

After a Flood...

- Get medical attention, if necessary.
- If your power is out, use a flashlight – candles or matches can be dangerous if gas lines are broken.
- Report any broken utility lines immediately.
- Boil drinking water, and have well water pumped-out and tested before use. Pay attention to public health warnings from local officials, and follow their directions.
- Throw out any food or drink that has come in contact with flood waters.

Find these tips and more in *Floods: The Awesome Power* – a brochure from National Weather Service: www.nws.noaa.gov/floodsafety/resources/FloodsTheAwesomePower_NSC.pdf.

**Find more information about National Flood Safety Awareness Week:
www.nws.noaa.gov/floodsafety/**