

## AFTER THE FLOOD

During the aftermath of a flooding event, follow these steps to aid your family's safety:

- Before entering a building, check for structural damage. Make sure it is not in danger of collapsing. Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter or tank, and let the house air for several minutes to remove foul odors or escaping gas.
- Avoid downed power lines and broken gas lines. Report them immediately to the electric or gas company, police or fire department.
- Upon entering the building, **DO NOT** use an open flame as a light source since gas may be trapped inside. A battery-operated flashlight is ideal.
- **DO NOT** handle live electrical equipment in wet areas. If appliances or electrical equipment have been in contact with water, have them checked before use.

## IMPORTANT "DO NOT" THINGS DURING A FLOOD

- **DO NOT** drive where the water is over the roads. Parts of the road may already be washed out. If your car stalls in a flooded area.
- **DO NOT** remain in the car. Abandon it as soon as possible and seek higher ground. Floodwaters can rise rapidly and sweep a car (and its occupants) away. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled vehicles.
- **DO NOT** drive in areas subject to sudden flooding.
- **DO NOT** try to cross a flowing stream where water is higher than one foot deep. You could be swept away by strong currents.
- **DO NOT** sightsee in flooded areas and
- **DO NOT** make unnecessary trips. Use the telephone only for emergencies or to report dangerous conditions.

## DO YOU NEED FLOOD INSURANCE?

Until the 1960's, flood insurance was practically unavailable to home and businesses owners. Since private insurance firms were unwilling to assume the financial risk alone, Congress voted in 1968 to create the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This federal program provided flood insurance at a reasonable cost in exchange for the careful management of flood-prone areas by local communities. Today, you can insure almost any enclosed building and its contents against flood loss, as long as your community is participating in the NFIP.

Flood Insurance is available to Washoe County property owners and renters, who are entitled to a reasonable rate because Washoe County is and NFIP member and has a floodplain

management program. **YOU do not have to live in a floodplain to purchase flood insurance.**

Approximately 30% of all flood insurance claims nationwide occur outside of the Special Flood Hazard Area. Property owners can insure their buildings and contents, and renters can insure their possessions. **Keep in mind, there is a 30 day waiting period before a flood insurance policy takes effect**, so do not get caught applying for flood insurance the day before the storm. For more information, call your local insurance agent or the NFIP at (800) 638-6620.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FLOOD AND FLOOD-PLAINS

- **Washoe County Emergency Management Website:**  
Phone: (775) 337-5898  
Web: <http://www.washoecounty.us/em/>
- **Washoe County Floodplain Information**  
Phone: (775) 328-2040  
Web: <http://www.washoecounty.us/em>
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**  
Phone: (425) 487-4600  
Web: <http://www.fema.gov/nfip/>
- **Truckee Meadows Flood Awareness:**  
Web: <http://www.floodawareness.com/>
- **Truckee River Flood Project:**  
Web: <http://www.truckeeflood.us/>
- **Floodplain Management Association:**  
Web: <http://www.floodplain.org/>
- **Association of State Floodplain Managers :**  
Web: <http://www.floods.org/>
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:**  
Web: <http://www.lrl.usace.army.mil/>
- **Nevada Floodplain Management Program**  
Phone: (775) 687-4380 ext. 232  
Web: <http://water.nv.gov/Flood/index.cfm>

## FLOOD AWARENESS



**A GUIDE TO HELP WASHOE  
COUNTY RESIDENTS PREPARE  
FOR AND RESPOND TO FLOODING**

**WASHOE COUNTY**  
*"Dedicated To Excellence in Public Service"*

## **SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FLOODING IN WASHOE COUNTY**

The Truckee River has had one major flood event per decade, on average. Fourteen major floods have occurred in the Truckee Meadows since 1862 when records were first kept. Our region has experienced major flood events every decade since the 1950s.

While some types of seasonal flood-related damage occurs every year, the flooding events of 1986, 1997, and 2005 represent the most recent significant flooding. In 1997, prolonged precipitation accompanied by an early snowmelt, caused by a warm-weather trend known as the "Pineapple Express" caused the Truckee River, Steamboat Creek, Boynton Slough, North Truckee Drain and several other tributaries throughout the Truckee Meadows to rise above 100-year flood levels, causing flooding in both rural and urban areas. Over 7,000 acres of land were flooded and damages were estimated to be over 700 million through out the Truckee Meadows region and over 1 billion over six counties. Washoe County estimated that the flood of 1997 affected over one-half of the overall County population.

## **CAUSES OF FLOODING**

Flooding occurs when climate (or weather patterns), geology and hydrology combine to create conditions where river and stream waters flow outside of their normal course and "overspill" beyond their banks. In Washoe County, the combination of these and other factors, create chronic seasonal flooding conditions.

Flooding is most common December through March in Washoe County when storms encompassed with warmer temperatures and heavy rainfall come over the snow-packed Sierra Nevada mountains. Larger floods result from the heavier rains that continue over the course of several days, incorporated with by snowmelt at a time when the soil is near saturation from previous precipitation. Riverine flooding and urban flooding are the two types of flooding that primarily affect Washoe County. Riverine flooding is the overbank flooding of rivers and streams, the natural process of which adds sediments and nutrients to fertile floodplain areas. Urban flooding results from the conversion of land from fields or vacant land to buildings, parking lots and roads, though which the land loses its ability to absorb rainfall and the water runoff from the storms causes increased water in the low-lying areas.

## **WASHOE COUNTY FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM**

For information on what you should do during the response phase of an emergency, listen to the Emergency Alert System (EAS). EAS is the new Emergency Alert System adopted by the Federal Communications Commission to replace the old Emergency Broadcast System and is a universal tool to route emergency messages to the public swiftly and efficiently.

**Civil alert emergency radio.** A civil alert emergency receiver is

a radio receiver that you have in your home, business, or public facility to warn and inform you of a local emergency event or major disaster. This receiver will alert you of a local emergency 24 hours a day. You can purchase these radios at most electronic shops or on the internet.

### **Radio station for civil alert emergency radio.**

Your civil alert emergency radio will need to be tuned into KKOH-AM 780 which is "primary relay station number one" for Northern Nevada. It will receive and relay any alerts or tests to you.

**Emergency Alert System tests.** The Emergency Alert System is tested weekly and monthly. If your emergency alert receiver is activated during a real emergency.

1. Tune into your local news radio or TV station for latest breaking news.
2. Do not use your telephone or cellular phone unless it is an emergency.
3. Do not call 911 for non-emergency calls. Please call 334-COPS or 337-5800 instead.
4. Listen for specific instructions from your emergency alert receiver such as take shelter, close doors and windows, etc.

### **IS YOUR PROPERTY IN A FLOOD HAZARD AREA?**

Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) are defined as the 100-year floodplain, which is defined as any area that has a one percent chance of flooding in any given year. Smaller scale floods (50-year and 10-year) have a greater chance of occurring in any year and can pose a significant flood hazard to people and property close to channels and streams. Also, floods larger than the 100-year event can occur.

First and foremost, you should become informed as to the flood hazard potential for your property.

### **STEPS TO TAKE TODAY**

**During an emergency, your personal safety is more important than your most valuable property.** Take steps now to help your family prepare for an emergency.

Store these supplies in a safe, accessible location:

First Aid kit and essential medicine  
Water and non-perishable food (include baby food and food for special diets).  
Portable radio, flashlights, extra batteries and non-electric can opener.

- Practice safe routes from your home with all family members and establish a safe place out of the floodplain to meet if you are separated. People who live in frequently flooded areas should keep on hand materials such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and lumber which can be used to protect property. Remem-

ber, sandbags should not be stacked against the outer walls of a building since, when wet, the bags may create added pressure on the foundation.

- Buy flood insurance! You should contact your property/casualty agent or broker about eligibility for flood insurance, which is offered through the National Flood Insurance Program. Generally, there is a 30 day waiting period for this policy to become effective, so don't wait until the flood is coming to apply.
- Keep your insurance policies and a list of personal property in a safe place, such as a safety deposit box. Know the name and location of the agent who issued these policies.

### **DURING THE STORM**

The safety of your family is the most important consideration. Since floodwaters can rise very rapidly, you should be prepared to evacuate before the water level reaches your property. During the storm, the following tips may be helpful:

- Keep a battery powered radio tuned to a local station. Follow emergency instructions as they are given.
- If you are caught in the house by suddenly rising waters, move to the second floor and, if necessary, to the roof. Take warm clothing, a flashlight and a portable radio with you. Then wait for help. Don't try to swim to safety. Rescue teams will look for you.
- When outside the house, remember: **WATER DEPTHS DURING FLOODS ARE DECEPTIVE.** Try to avoid flooded areas, and DO NOT attempt to walk or drive through floodwaters that are more than knee deep.

### **IF, AND ONLY IF, TIME PERMITS**

There are several precautionary steps that can be taken:

- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks, and jugs with clean water in case regular supplies are contaminated. You can sanitize these items by first rinsing in bleach.
- Board up windows or protect them with storm shutters or tape to prevent flying glass.
- Bring outdoor possessions inside the house or tie them down securely. This includes lawn furniture, garbage cans, grills, and other movable objects that might be swept away or hurled about.
- Stock the car with blankets, first aid kit, flashlights, dry clothing, and any special medication needed by your family. Park the car in an area safe from rising waters.

### **REMEMBER YOUR ANIMALS**

Plan for temporary care of family pets during emergencies. Shelters do not have adequate staff or facilities to care for animals. Frightened pets may be injured or killed during severe storms.