

# Before a flood

## What you need to know

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### Overview

Floods are the most frequent natural hazard in Canada and have had devastating effects in Alberta. They can occur at any time of the year and are most often caused by heavy rainfall, rapid melting of a thick snow pack, ice jams, or more rarely, the failure of a natural or man-made dam.

### Facts

- A heavy rainfall can result in flooding, particularly when the ground is still frozen or already saturated from previous storms.
- Flash flooding - in which warning time is extremely limited - can be caused by violent storms or dams breaking.
- Many rivers experience flooding at one time or another. The potential for flood damage is high where there is development on low-lying flood-prone lands.

### Preparing for a flood

- Put weather protection sealant around basement windows and the base of ground-level doors.
- Install the drainage for downspouts a sufficient distance from your residence to ensure that water moves away from the building.
- Consider installing a sump pump and zero reverse flow valves in basement floor drains.
- Do not store your important documents in the basement. Keep them at a higher level, protected from flood damage.

### If flooding is forecasted

- Take special precautions to safeguard electrical, natural gas or propane heating equipment.
- If there is enough time, consult your electricity or fuel supplier for instructions on how to proceed.
- In floods, sheltering livestock may be the wrong thing to do. Leaving animals unsheltered is preferable because flood waters that inundate a barn could trap animals inside, causing them to drown.
- If evacuation of the animals is being considered, then evacuation procedures, places and routes should be planned. Animal evacuation routes must not interfere with human evacuation routes. Know in advance the places where your animals will be accepted.

### If flooding is imminent

- Move furniture, electrical appliances and other belongings to floors above ground level.
- Remove toxic substances such as pesticides and insecticides from the flood area to prevent pollution.
- Remove toilet bowls and plug basement sewer drains and toilet connections with a wooden stopper.
- Disconnect eaves troughs if they are connected to the house sewer.
- In some cases, homes may be protected with sandbags or polyethylene barriers. This approach requires specific instructions from your local emergency officials.
- Do NOT attempt to shut off electricity if any water is present. Water and live electrical wires can be lethal. Leave your home immediately and do not return until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.

## Stay informed

- Download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app to receive current information about disasters or emergencies impacting your community.
- [Alberta Environment forecasts and advisories](#) for high streamflows, flooding and ice jams in rivers and streams in Alberta.
- Data and advisories now available through the [Alberta Rivers: Data and Advisories](#) app.
- [Information for producers and animal owners.](#)
- Contact your municipality's Director of Emergency Management.
- Contact the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 or dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton.

## Be prepared

Make sure you always have a 72-hour kit ready to go.