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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## **Homeowner Tips to Prevent and Minimize Environmental Damage in Flood-Prone Areas**

New Hampshire has witnessed several significant flooding events since 2006 and may suffer from such events in the future. Extensive plans and preventive measures have been taken by the State to reduce the disruption and damage caused by flooding, but the homeowner too can take action to prevent loss and environmental contamination. The following list provides suggested examples of activities the homeowner can take **before** the threat of flooding occurs again.

### **Obtaining Flood Insurance**

- Contact your insurance agent or local government to discuss flood insurance coverage. There is typically a waiting period of 30 days before coverage becomes effective after a binder has been issued. So don't delay!

### **Preparing Your Property**

- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.
- You may need to store materials like sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting and lumber to protect your house from flood waters and to make quick repairs after a severe storm.
- Stack sandbags away from house walls to prevent flood waters from reaching your home.
- Identify dams in your area. Be aware of what could happen if they fail. Become familiar with local emergency action plans, including evacuation routes.

### **Preparing Your Fuel Tanks**

- Whenever possible, fuel storage tanks and containers should be kept out of flood-prone areas.
- Aboveground storage tanks should always be located on a firm, stable foundation (such as a concrete floor or pad) and mounted on steel pipe legs fitted with floor flanges. In a flood-prone area, added measures should be taken to anchor or brace the storage tank so that it will not float or roll over and cause a release. Anchoring can be accomplished by securing the floor flanges to the concrete floor or pad.
- For indoor tanks, bracing can be installed between the top of the tank and the ceiling or floor joists above.

- Fuel lines and filter housings should be secured and protected from physical damage.
- If you fear that flooding of your basement is imminent and the water level may go higher than your tank, **temporarily** plug the fill and vent pipes of the tank to prevent loss of oil due to displacement by water entering the tank. **Note:** Be sure to remove the plug material prior to adding oil to the tank or drawing oil from the tank, e.g., operating your furnace, receiving an oil delivery, etc.

### **Preparing Your Basement**

- Remove or elevate all containers of paint, pesticides, household chemicals, etc., to the first floor or higher.
- Remove all personal items from the basement or place them on shelves high enough to prevent their loss or spillage.
- Conduct a test run of your sump pump. If a sump pump is not available, have buckets, towels, and fans readily available. If possible, also have a dehumidifier.
- If the potential for flooding is imminent, you can minimize the possibility of mold becoming a problem by removing all porous materials, e.g., rugs, boxes, books, clothing, etc., from the areas where flooding is likely to occur.
- Place the furnace and water heater on masonry blocks or concrete at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.
- If your washer and dryer are in the basement, elevate them on masonry or pressure-treated lumber at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.

### **Preparing outbuildings**

- If your shed, garage, or other structures lie in a flood-prone area and are used to store materials such as paints, thinners, gasoline, etc., remove these materials from harm's way and place them in a safe, elevated location for storage.
- Relocate lawn tractors, lawnmowers, leaf blowers, tools, etc. to a higher elevation and away from the effects of flood waters.

### **Preparing your well**

- Armor the wellhead with cement blocks, steel bars, large stones, etc. to protect against physical damage by floating debris, e.g., logs, lumber, appliances, etc.
- Install a water-tight wellhead cover (available from local water well contractors) to protect against infiltration by contaminated flood waters.

### **Preparing your septic system**

- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Standing or slow-moving flood waters typically will not cause long-term damage to a septic system. However, fast moving flood waters can cause damage to a system, especially to a raised or mounded system, due to scouring and erosion. Therefore, if possible, divert flowing storm water away from the system with sandbags or similar materials to help minimize potential erosion.

## **Preparing your vehicles**

- If flooding is imminent, relocate all active vehicles to a location outside the flood zone to prevent costly water damage to electrical systems, interiors, and other components, as well as to prevent spillage from gasoline tanks, antifreeze from the cooling system, oil from the crankcase, etc.
- Move all stored vehicles, vehicle parts, tires, batteries, etc. to higher ground to prevent them from becoming part of the debris flow swept away by flood waters.

## **Other Areas of Your Home**

- Clear all roof, gutter, and foundation drains of debris to allow for proper removal of flood waters.
- Remove all yard items such as children's pools, lawn furniture, bird baths, bird feeders, swing sets (if possible), etc., from the flood zone to protect them from loss. This will prevent them from becoming dangerous moving objects caught in the debris flow during flooding.

For more information, go to:

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

[www.des.nh.gov/floodinfo.htm](http://www.des.nh.gov/floodinfo.htm).

[www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/bem/](http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/bem/)