

Dept. of Military Affairs: March 15-19 is Flood Safety Awareness Week in Wisconsin

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MADISON, Wis. — Warmer spring temperatures are a welcome relief in Wisconsin, but they also mark a return to flood season across the state. Flooding from melting snow or heavy spring rains is one of the most common hazards in Wisconsin, and it puts lives and property at risk each year.

To encourage everyone in the state to be prepared, Gov. Tony Evers has declared March 15-19 Flood Safety Awareness Week in Wisconsin. ReadyWisconsin and the Department of Health Services asks everyone in the state to take this week to assess their flood risk and learn how to protect themselves before, during, and after a flood.

“Floodwaters can put you in life-threatening danger in just a matter of seconds,” said Dr. Darrell L. Williams, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator. “In the last decade alone, 10 people in the state have lost their lives due to flooding, showing just how deadly this hazard can be and why it’s important to learn more about what you can do to keep yourself safe.”

As Wisconsin’s climate gets warmer and wetter, these changing conditions are bringing more destructive storms and dumping heavy rainfalls in short timeframes, creating devastating impacts on communities and families.

“Climate change is a growing public health crisis and health risks from frequent flooding are a big concern — whether it’s well contamination, physical injuries, or respiratory diseases and allergies that are worsened from excessive mold exposure,” said Julie Willems Van Dijk, Deputy Secretary and Acting Public Health

Officer at the Department of Health Services.

Each year, flooding also causes millions of dollars in damage to homes, business, and public infrastructure throughout the state of Wisconsin. Many of those losses are not covered by basic insurance policies either, often requiring special coverage through the National Flood Insurance Program or through a private company.

While you can't always stop the waters from rising, the following tips can help improve safety for you and your community **before a flood**:

- Know your flood risk. Assess the potential for flooding on your property if you live in a flood plain or near a body of water, or have a basement. Plan with your family for what you will do if the floodwaters begin to rise.
- Build a "Go Kit." Include items such as food, water, cash, medications and copies of important documents (personal identification like passports and birth certificates, medical records, insurance policies, and financial documents).
- Make an emergency plan — If you can't make it home or need to leave quickly, identify a meeting place for your family. Make a list of emergency numbers and important contacts.
- Keep water out of your house. Clean gutters regularly, direct downspouts away from your foundation, repair cracks in your foundation, improve grading so water flows away from your house, and cover window wells.
- Investigate flood insurance. Standard insurance policies generally do not cover flooding. Most flood coverage requires 30 days to take effect. Find more information about flood insurance options at <https://www.floodsmart.gov/>.
- Move valuables out of the basement. Store important records and documents in waterproof containers on upper levels of your home.

Follow these tips during and after a flood:

- Stay up to date on the forecast. Identify multiple ways to receive alerts about dangerous weather conditions and potential flooding, such as a NOAA Weather Radio, trusted local news outlets, and mobile weather apps.
- Never drive or walk through flooded areas — turn around, don't drown! Just six inches of fast-moving water can sweep adults off their feet, while 12 inches can carry away a small car. Be especially careful while driving at night. Driving through floodwaters puts lives at risk — more than half of flood fatalities are vehicle related. Flooding killed one person in Wisconsin in 2020.
- Take steps to protect your health:

- Stay out of floodwaters, which can contain bacteria from human and animal waste, sharp objects, hazardous chemicals, downed power lines, and other dangerous items.
- If your home floods, follow cleaning and disinfection guidelines to avoid mold growth.
- If the power goes out for more than four hours, throw out refrigerated food or any food that came into contact with floodwater.
- If your drinking water well is flooded, disinfect the well and test the water to make sure it's safe before drinking it.
- If you use a generator, keep it outside at least 20 feet from your home to avoid illness or death from carbon monoxide, which can occur in enclosed spaces.

You can view Gov. Evers' Flood Safety Awareness Week proclamation at [Here](#).

For more information on Flood Safety Awareness Week, and for safety information throughout the year, go to <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>. DHS also has a [toolkit](#) with simple steps to protect yourself and your property before, during, and after a flood.