Dept. of Military Affairs: February 28 – March 4 is Flood Safety Awareness Week in Wisconsin

Posted on Monday, Feb 28, 2022

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MADISON, Wis. — As winter melts away to spring, it also marks a return to flood season. Flooding from melting snow or heavy rain is one of the most common and most costly natural hazards in Wisconsin.

To encourage everyone in the state to be prepared, Gov. Tony Evers has declared Feb. 28 – March 4 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 rise in a matter of seconds, creating a potentially life-threatening situation," said Greg Engle, acting Wisconsin Emergency Management Administrator. "People often underestimate the force and power of water. Since 2010, more than a dozen people in the state lost their lives during flooding. The more people heed warnings and avoid flooded areas, the more lives we can save."

Much of Wisconsin is currently experiencing drought conditions, but heavy rainfalls can still produce flooding quickly. 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.
- 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.

For more information on Flood Safety Awareness Week, and for safety information throughout the year, go to http://readywisconsin.wi.gov.

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