

# Allegan County Emergency Management



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## INFORMATIONAL PRESS RELEASE - FLOOD TIPS

Allegan County Emergency Management and the Allegan County Health Department would like to provide the following flood tips.

Flooding Tips: <http://www.ready.gov/floods>

If you live in a high flood risk area, personal preparation is the key to avoiding disaster. Take solid steps ahead of time to ensure the safety of your family and minimize property loss, even when the flood waters come lapping at your doorstep. For the latest updates on weather conditions please contact Allegan County Public Safety Hotline at 269-686-4570 or visit the web site at <http://www.allegancounty.org/Government/EMD>

By following this list of flood safety tips, your family and home will be ready when waters begin to rise.

1. Following a flood, there may be power outages that could last for several days or even weeks. Stay tuned to local TV and radio for constant updates on the weather forecast, flood level, and watches and warnings. **Take all advice and warnings seriously.**
2. Form a family emergency/evacuation plan, refer to <http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan> . Make sure everyone knows where to go in the event of a flood warning. Make a list of those places you could go such as family or friends, shelters or other safe public buildings on higher ground. Provide each family member with a written list of the locations and phone numbers, preferably in order, from first to last resort.
3. Put together an emergency supply kit including battery-powered flashlights and radio, extra batteries, first aid kit and medications, hand sanitizers, rain gear and warm clothing, sleeping bags or bedding, and any other personal items you must have for health and safety.
4. Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food and bottled water. You will need one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation. Stock canned foods, dry mixes and other staples that do not require refrigeration, cooking, water or special preparation. Be sure to include a manual can opener and eating utensils with your food supplies.
5. Contact your local fire department for sandbags. You will be required to purchase your own sand and fill your own bags.
6. Watch the Army Corp of Engineers video at [SANDBAG](#) on how to build a sandbag levee.
7. Sandbag around ground level windows, and doors.
8. Sandbag around well heads to protect your water source.
9. Secure propane or chemical storage tanks.
10. Check with your home owners insurance company prior to an event and see if your have proper coverage if your sump pump or storm sewer fails.
11. Check your sump pump and make sure it is operational. If you can afford to do so, have a back-up sump pump ready to replace one that has failed.
12. Move what furniture and valuables you can to the highest floor of the house, or in single story Homes, raise them off of the ground as much as possible. Do this at the onset of a flood watch.
13. Evacuate to higher ground as soon as a flood warning is issued. Follow your family evacuation plan while avoiding waterways at all costs. Do not drive into standing water and abandon your car immediately if it does stall in water. Search for high, dry ground, and get there as quickly as possible.

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### Public Health guidance during excessive run-off and flooding:

1. With the excessive snow melting run-off and the potential for flooding, the waters may contain human fecal material and livestock manure from overflowing sewage systems and agricultural along with industrial waste.
2. Bacteria found in human fecal material and manure can cause waterborne illnesses. There is risk of disease from eating or drinking anything contaminated with floodwater. The most common waterborne illnesses are gastrointestinal and may cause vomiting, diarrhea or nausea. Less commonly, skin, ear and eye infections can result from contact with contaminated water. The public should avoid any contact with surface water due to the potential for high bacteria levels. If exposed, you should wash thoroughly to remove any potential contaminants.
3. If flood water reached your well or covered the top of the well casing, assume your well is contaminated. Water from your well should not be used for drinking, cooking, or brushing your teeth until the flood water recedes. Flooded wells must be disinfected and tested before homeowners resume using them.
4. If you have any open cuts or sores that will be exposed to floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and applying an antibiotic ointment to discourage infection.
5. To reduce cold-related risks when standing or working in water which is cooler than 75 degrees F (24 degrees C), wear insulated clothes and insulated rubber boots, take frequent breaks out of the water, wash your hands thoroughly and change into dry clothing when possible.
6. Refrain from fishing in local creeks, lakes and rivers during times of flooding or excessive agriculture run-off from snow melting. Fish from local fresh waters are most likely contaminated with high bacteria levels because of sewage leakage and manure run-off during floods. NO additional fish cleaning or elevated cooking temperature can assure safety for consumption.
7. Consider what you can do ahead of time to store your food safely in an emergency. If you live in a location that could be affected by a flood, plan your food storage on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water. Do not eat or drink food contaminated with flood water!
8. Digital, dial, or instant-read food thermometers and appliance thermometers will help you know if the food is at safe temperatures. Keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer will indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer. The refrigerator temperature should be 40 °F or below; the freezer, 0 °F or lower. If you are not sure a particular food has been kept cold enough, do not eat it.
9. During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half-full), if the door remains closed.
10. Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased. Continually monitor the refrigerator's temperature with a thermometer, if the temperature falls below 40 °F, discard the food. Fifty pounds of dry or block ice might hold a safe temperature of 0 °F or lower for an 18-cubic foot full freezer for several days. Monitor the freezer with the thermometer, if the temperature is above 0 °F, discard the food.
11. Remember to frequently wash your hands with soap and clean water! If clean water is not available use hand sanitizer. Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet, and after cleaning. Washing your hands will help prevent sickness.