



Flooding Preparedness for Churches

According to [Ready](#), a national public service advertising campaign, floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Regardless of where your organization is located, everyone is at risk of flooding. While some floods are minor and may only affect a neighborhood, others can be severe and impact multiple states. It is important to be educated and prepared in order to protect your organization and facility from the dangers of flooding.

The spring is a common time frame in which many floods occur. According to the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA), there are four main spring flood risks:

- **Spring thaw** – As the temperature gets warmer, snow begins to melt and runs into nearby lakes, streams and rivers. Oftentimes, this causes excess water to spill over their banks.
- **Spring rains** – Heavy rains that last for multiple days lead to flooding due to oversaturated grounds, overflowing storm drains or rivers spilling over their banks.
- **Flash flooding** – A flash flood occurs when intense rainfall from storms causes rapid flooding in low-lying areas.
- **Levees and dams** – While levees and dams are designed to protect from flooding, they can erode and weaken over time. During larger floods, there is a risk that these structures will be overtopped or even fail.

Before a Flood

Regardless of the time of year, there is always a chance for a flood. Consider these four preparation tips when a flood is threatening your church:

- **Safeguard your possessions** – Important papers and valuables should be moved to a safe, dry place. The best way to protect these items is to create a personal flood file using a safe deposit box or waterproof container. Be sure to include items such as a copy of your insurance policies, critical documents and a facility inventory, a written and visual record of major items and valuables within your facility.
- **Prepare the building** – While you may not be able to prevent all damage caused by a flood, take small steps in attempt to strengthen your building. For example, clear debris from gutters and downspouts or move furniture and valuables to safe place. Raise anything important or hazardous above the projected flood elevation, such as electrical components. Additionally, utilities should be turned off and electrical appliances disconnected.
- **Create an evacuation plan** – Plan and practice an evacuation plan for your organization. Be sure to identify the safe routes that are on higher ground.

After a Flood

Once authorities have indicated it is OK to return to your facility, beware of hazards as you check for damage. Avoid moving water, check for structural damage and contact the appropriate professionals if you suspect damage to water, gas, electric or sewer lines. As you begin to clean up the property, immediately remove any wet contents to prevent molding. If you chose to hire cleanup or repair contractors, it is crucial to check references and ensure they are qualified and insured.



Floods are very unpredictable. Their timing and severity are never easy to determine. However, by knowing your organization's risk and becoming educated on how to be prepared, you can work to lessen the damage caused by a flood.

Sources:

- [FEMA Spring Flooding: Risks and Protection Fact Sheet](#)
- www.floodsmart.gov
- www.ready.gov/floods