

# Preparing for Floods

Your home and property can be flooded by natural or human-caused events even if you don't live in a flood plain.

During a flood, hazardous materials can escape into floodwaters, damage your home, threaten your family's health, and harm the environment.

## Act Now to Manage the Hazardous Products in Your Household BEFORE Flood Season!



- 1. Know what hazardous products are in your home.** Many common household products contain hazardous chemicals. Look for products labeled "Caution", "Warning", "Poison", or "Danger"; they are hazardous. These include cleaners, automotive products, oil-based paints, home improvement, and gardening products.
- 2. Clear out household hazardous products.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that each household has about 100 pounds of hazardous products on hand.
  - Get rid of hazardous products you are not using. Proper disposal of these chemicals is through your local household hazardous waste program. Take advantage of hazardous waste disposal events. Do a general clean-out and disposal of extra or outdated hazardous products at least once a year. *Never* pour these products down a household drain, toilet, or outside (street) drain.
  - Buy only what you need to do the job. This will help keep hazardous materials in your household to a minimum.
  - Buy products that are the least hazardous to do the job.
  - Recycle old electronics: televisions, computers, and monitors. Check [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/eproductrecycle/](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/eproductrecycle/) for free recycling services.
- 3. Store Household Hazardous Products Properly.**
  - Put your hazardous household products in a tray or tub, if possible. You can use a caddy to hold the products under your kitchen or bathroom sink. These types of containers not only catch drips and leaks, but can also make it easier for you to move your hazardous products to higher ground if needed.
  - Make sure your hazardous products always have their original label on them. If labels come loose, re-attach them with tape or glue.

To find out how, where, and when to properly dispose of hazardous products, contact your local household hazardous waste program or visit <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/recycle/>.

If you have questions about hazardous household products and safer alternatives, call the Toxic Free Tips Information line at 1-866-939-9991 or visit the Web site at [www.ecy.wa.gov/toxicfreetips](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxicfreetips).

- Keep household products in ORIGINAL containers. Never store hazardous products in empty food or beverage containers. Keep lids on tight. Turn spray heads to “off”.
- Secure storage shelves to the wall with screws and anchors or with ‘L’ brackets. In a flood, shelving can easily tip over, spilling hazardous products.
- If a “flood warning” has been issued in your area move all of your hazardous products to the highest point in your household.



## What is your emergency plan?

- Think about this now, so you can react faster and more effectively in the face of trouble.
- Have an evacuation plan. Keep a battery-operated AM/FM radio handy for local emergency news or buy a NOAA Weather radio for as little as \$20. Have a disaster supply kit ready for rapid evacuation. Don’t forget prescribed medications and important contact numbers.
- If you are told to evacuate, do so immediately. Avoid unknown hazards – use only recommended evacuation routes.
- Store a second set of vital documents at an off-site location.
- Prepare for disaster cleanup with gloves, boots, coveralls, eye protection, duct tape, plastic bags, trashcans, buckets, and spill kits.
- Check that your insurance policies are up-to-date and include flood insurance. Federal flood insurance is available through [www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/](http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/).
- For more information visit [www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prepare\\_personal\\_preparedness.shtml](http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prepare_personal_preparedness.shtml).

## After the Flood

- Return to your home only after local authorities have issued an “ALL CLEAR.”
- **LOOK OUT FOR SPILLED CHEMICALS.** If hazardous products have been spilled, your household could be contaminated by them. Carpet, dry wall, standing water, and the mud and silt left behind by flood waters could be hazardous.
- The air inside closed areas may contain toxic fumes. Ventilate as much as possible before entering.
- Use protective gear when cleaning up. Wear rubber or vinyl gloves and boots. Wash your hands at rest breaks.
- Keep children and pets out of the clean-up area. If youngsters or pets do get into mud and silt, wash them off immediately. Have the number for Washington’s Poison Control Center handy: 1-800-222-1222. (Note: the center now charges a fee for calls about pets or animals.)
- Check all hazardous products. If a container has leaked, its top is loose, or it has no label, put it aside for proper disposal. Also dispose of spray cans touched by floodwaters; they could rust through and explode. If possible, put items for disposal in plastic or metal tubs. If you have nothing else, use double layers of plastic garbage bags. Always dispose of these hazardous products properly – through your local hazardous waste program.

For more information and guidance visit [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/floods](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/floods).



*To ask about available formats for the visually impaired please call the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program at 360-407-6700. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.*

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