

Preparing for Floods

Floods can happen anywhere. Even if your business is not in a floodplain, it can be flooded by natural or manmade events.

Business owners are liable for any contamination and cleanup caused by their hazardous materials.

Act now on hazardous products and waste at your business BEFORE flood season!



1. Manage your chemical products and wastes.

- Get advice on how to prevent problems from these materials during floods. Call the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction staff at your nearest Department of Ecology regional office, www.ecy.wa.gov/org.html, or your County Health or Public Works department.
- Reduce your stock of hazardous materials. You can offer unused materials and wastes to exchange services, such as IMEX: www.govlink.org/hazwaste/business/imex
- You don't have to be a manufacturer to have hazardous waste after a flood. Retailers might have to dispose of flood-damaged hazardous products, such as garden pesticides or pool chemicals.

2. Get your shop in order. Avoid stockpiling.

- Get as much hazardous waste as possible off site. Send it to a permitted Treatment, Storage, and Disposal (TSD) facility (www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/hwfacilities/index.html). Some counties take small amounts of business waste at their Moderate Risk Waste (MRW) facility.
- Know what hazardous materials you are storing, their hazards (flammable, explosive, etc.), and their safe handling, disposal, and cleanup.
- Limit the amount you keep on site. Purchase the smallest amounts you can. Use up what you have.
- Work with your suppliers to evaluate what products you need to keep on site.
- Use the safest products possible.
- Keep an inventory of what you have – that can help with post-flood cleanup.
- Prepare your flood barriers (sandbags, etc.), flood doors, or other flood protection devices. Don't wait for the flood warning; that will be too late.

3. Store hazardous materials properly.

- Label all containers with up-to-date information.
- Keep containers sealed and in good condition.
- Store materials inside, if practical.
- Make sure your equipment, supplies, and drums and other containers can't float away or break open.
- Check with your local Fire Marshal on securing aboveground tanks.

- If practical and safe (according to fire or other local codes), store materials above flood levels. Use waterproof containers, second story storage, or mezzanines.

4. Figure out your “Plan B.”

- Think about this now, so you can react faster and more effectively in the face of trouble. Economists estimate that every \$1 spent in flood preparedness saves \$7 in disaster-related economic losses.
- Plan to stay in business – Prepare a business plan so you can recover and resume normal business activities as quickly as possible. See the “Business Continuity” information on the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) Website: www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/business/.
- Promote Family and Individual Preparedness. Encourage your employees and their families to: **Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed.**
- Deciding to stay or go – Have an evacuation plan and a “shelter-in-place” plan. Decide how to secure hazardous materials if you have to evacuate.
- Store a second set of vital documents at an off-site location. Include your hazardous materials information.
- Prepare for disaster cleanup with gloves, boots, coveralls, eye protection, duct tape, plastic bags, trashcans, buckets, and spill kits.
- Floods can also affect TSDs. Seek out alternative TSDs you can use if your usual vendor isn’t available.
- Check that your insurance policies are up-to-date and include flood insurance. Federal flood insurance is available through www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/.

When Flooding is Possible/Probable

- Monitor news reports and alert systems so you can take appropriate action.
 - National Weather Service Watches, Warnings and Advisory Alerts: www.wrh.noaa.gov/sew/.
 - Consider buying a weather radio. NOAA Weather Radio Receivers are available at many retail outlets and via the internet. Prices range from \$20 to over \$200.
 - EMD Respond website: www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/business/prep_business_respond.shtml.
- Use sandbags and other flood protection.
- Prepare to evacuate if advised to do so.

After the Flood

- Return to your business location only after local authorities have issued an “ALL CLEAR.”
- For guidance on what to do with hazardous wastes after floods: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/Floods/flood_debris.html businesses.html
- Check for structural damage and other hazards before re-entering.
- Keep electricity turned off until a qualified electrician has inspected the system.
- Remove sandbags. If they are contaminated, dispose of them properly. If not, store them for future use.

For more information and guidance visit 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.