

## Fact Sheet: Flooding

*In a time of severe droughts, many California residents do not recognize the risk of flooding. California is at risk for both extreme floods and flash flooding.*

### Flooding

Flooding is the temporary overflow of water on land that is typically dry. Floods are the most commonly occurring natural disaster in the United States. There are a variety of, primarily unpreventable, causes of flooding

- Rain
- Snow
- Coastal storms
- Storm surges
- Overflows of dams and other water systems

California has had multiple large floods and is at risk for flooding in the future.



### Extreme Floods

A prediction model known as “ARkStorm”, short for atmospheric river 1,000k storm, is based on historical floods. It predicts a scenario with an extreme storm leading to extreme flood events.

- An extreme flood has the potential to cause more economic damage than a major earthquake.

ARkStorm has been developed into two new scenarios ARkHist and ARkFuture as part of ARkStorm 2.0.

- ARkStorm 2.0 accounts for climate change and new scientific advances.
- Climate change has led to predictions there will be more extreme floods in California.
- It is estimated that due to climate change, the likelihood of an event capable of producing catastrophic flooding has already doubled.

### Day to Day Flooding

Even without an extreme storm event, there is still a risk of flooding in California. Isolated storms, burn scars, and changed environment all create significant chances for flash flooding.

- Flash floods are sudden and without warning. A flood can happen in minutes.

### Flood Preparedness

**Get flood insurance:** Most home insurance does not cover floods.

- Additional flood insurance policies are needed.

**Keep important documents safe:** Place important documents in a waterproof and fireproof container.

- Create password-protected digital copies.

**Prepare your home:** Many homes are not ready to handle sudden floods. Preventative measures are the best strategy to deal with future potential floods.

- Clean gutters and drains
- Move valued items to higher locations
- Prepare with sandbags when flooding is anticipated.

## During a Flood

**Determine the best course of action:** This depends on the type of flooding. Local authorities will typically provide instructions.

- Evacuation
- Moving to higher ground
- Staying where you are

**Avoid driving:** Stay off the roads, unless it is an emergency or you are directed to evacuate.

**Seek shelter:** Find a safe place to shelter.

- Remain in place until the water has receded

**Turn around, don't drown:** Do not attempt to drive, walk, or swim through flood waters.

- As little as six inches of moving water can knock a person down, and one foot of moving water can sweep a vehicle away.
- Drowning is the number one cause of death in floods.

**Stay off bridges:** Bridges that are over fast moving water can be especially dangerous.

**Beware of electrocution:** Electrical currents can travel through standing water.

- Electrocution is the second leading cause of death in floods.

## After a Flood

**Ensure water is safe to use:** Water supplies can be contaminated during floods.

- Listen to local officials prior to resuming to use water.

**Clean surfaces that were exposed to flood waters:** Use a mixture of 1 cup bleach and 1 gallon water to disinfect.

- Discard items that cannot be disinfected.

**Protect yourself while cleaning:** Wear rubber and plastic gloves.

**Thoroughly dry flooded areas of your home:** Use fans, air conditioning units, and dehumidifiers for to dry wet areas.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Be ready: Floods*.  
[https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/documents/beready\\_floods.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/documents/beready_floods.pdf)

Contra Costa County. (n.d.). *Reducing flood damages*.  
<https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/5896/Reducing-Flood-Damages>

Federal Emergency Management Agency. *Be prepared for a flood*. (March 2018).  
[https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/flood\\_information-sheet.pdf](https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/flood_information-sheet.pdf)

Huang, X., & Swain, D. L. (2022). Climate change is increasing the risk of a California megaflood. *Science Advances*, 8(32).  
<https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abq0995>

Ready. (9 December, 2021). *Floods*.  
<https://www.ready.gov/floods>