



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600

November 7, 2024

AL TSA: AFH #2024-044
AL TSA: ALF #2024-039
AL TSA: CCRSS #2024-033
AL TSA: ESF #2024-036
AL TSA: ICF/IID #2024-025
AL TSA: NH #2024-056

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CONSIDERATIONS FOR FLOODING

Dear Administrator/Provider/Superintendent:

This fall and winter season, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts wetter-than-average conditions for the northern-tier of the continental United States, specifically the Pacific Northwest¹. Residential Care Services (RCS) is advising that you evaluate the risk of your facility and take appropriate steps to prepare for potential flooding.

In Washington State, flooding is the costliest natural hazard. There is an 80% chance that 10 or more floods will occur in the state in any given year. Since 1970, every county in Washington State has received a Presidential Disaster Declaration for flooding². Now is the time to begin preparing for your facility.

This letter contains guidance, resources, and tools that you may incorporate into your emergency plans. Take the time to evaluate your facilities risks, begin preparedness activities, review your emergency & insurance plans, and perform drills with your staff before the real event occurs.

Evaluating Your Facility's Risk for Flooding

Visit the FEMA Flood Map Service Center to see if your facility is at risk. This site allows you to enter your address and understand what risk your facility faces. Any location with a 1% chance or higher of experiencing a flood each year is considered high risk.

<https://www.fema.gov/flood-map>

Review Your Insurance Policies

Flood insurance is widely available through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program:

<https://www.floodsmart.gov/>

There are, however, limits to commercial flood insurance policies. It may be necessary to purchase supplemental coverage. There is also a waiting period for the insurance go into effect. Visit the Office of Insurance Commissioner flood insurance site for more information:

<https://www.insurance.wa.gov/flood-insurance>

Prepare Your Facility Now

Take steps to mitigate damage to your facility and impact to residents before conditions are primed for flooding:

- Clear debris from gutters and downspouts to avoid accumulation of water.
- Know your contact information for utility companies.

¹ <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/us-winter-outlook-warmer-and-drier-south-wetter-north>

² <https://mil.wa.gov/flood>

- Inventory your backup water and food supplies.
- Move hazardous material to areas likely to stay dry.
- Ensure vehicles are adequately fueled in the event evacuation is necessary.
- Sign up for emergency alerts through your local emergency management agencies and weather services.

Additionally, FEMA has a published guide on protecting utility systems:

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_p-348_protecting_building_utility_systems_from_flood_damage_2017.pdf

Prior to a Flood

When flooding conditions progress and flooding is a possibility, take the following steps to prepare for the possibility of a flood:

- Plan your evacuation routes, including destination sites and routes you will follow.
- Understand the difference between a flood watch and flood warning.
 - Flood Watch: issued when conditions are favorable for flooding. It does not mean flooding will occur but is possible.
 - Flood Warning: A flood warning is issued when the hazardous weather event is imminent or already happening.

New tools are available through the National Weather Service to provide accurate flood impacts. Familiarize yourself with these tools to better monitor and respond to flooding:

<https://www.weather.gov/news/232609-experimental-flood-inundation-maps>

During a Flood

- Activate emergency plans. This may include evacuation, sheltering-in-place, and staffing plans.
- Notify RCS of any evacuation or evacuation notices as soon as possible.
- Alert all residents, staff, visitors, and resident's families of the situation.
- Disconnect utilities until officials have given clear. Unplug all unnecessary equipment from outlets.
- Avoid power lines.
- Do not pump out water until flooding recedes.
- **Turn Around, Don't Drown.** Never walk, swim, or drown through floodwater. Do not encourage staff to engage in unsafe behaviors for commutes. Deaths can occur in as little of six inches of water.

The Nursing Home Incident Command System has published this checklist for response activities for flooding that you may incorporate into your emergency plans:

https://www.cahf.org/Portals/29/DisasterPreparedness/NHICS/FloodIRG_2017.pdf

After a Flood

- Stay informed through local news and local emergency authorities for information on road conditions.
- Avoid flood waters. Standing water may have hidden dangers, such as toxins and chemicals. Standing water in roadways may have sharp objects or be collapsed.
- Avoid disaster areas.
- Even if given clearance, your facility may not be safe for habitation. Home may need drying or other remediation services.

- Check with local public health to determine if water is safe for consumption. If your facility or home is on a well, it may not be safe for consumption. It may be necessary to use bottled water until well is tested and inspected.
- Discard spoiled food, any food that came into contact with flood water. Any furniture such as sofas or mattresses that cannot be adequately cleaned may need to be discarded.
- Notify Residential Care Services of any significant damage to facility, evacuations, or disruption of services.

Washington Department of Health has information on their site for flood cleanup:

<https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/be-prepared-be-safe/floods/cleanup>

Additional Tools and Resources:

Incident Response Guide: Flooding (Nursing Home Incident Command System)

https://www.cahf.org/Portals/29/DisasterPreparedness/NHICS/FloodIRG_2017.pdf

Flood Inundation Maps (National Weather Service)

<https://www.weather.gov/news/232609-experimental-flood-inundation-maps>

FEMA Flood Maps

<https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps>

FEMA National Flood Insurance Program

<https://www.floodsmart.gov/>

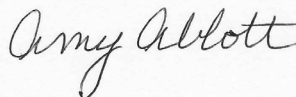
Washington Department of Health: Floods

<https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/be-prepared-be-safe/severe-weather-and-natural-disasters/floods>

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. Please see the documents on the [Residential Care Services Internet page](#) for specific strategies that you may implement into your emergency plans. If you have any questions, please contact your local RCS Field Manager.

For questions about the information in this letter, contact Richard Freed, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Richard.Freed@dshs.wa.gov or (360) 819-7001.

Sincerely,



Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: “Partnering with People”