

Thurston County Flood Bulletin

PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION FOR THE 2006-07 SEASON

Fall, 2006

Phone Alert Test Set Oct. 30 - Nov. 3

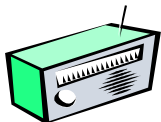
Subscribers of the Thurston County telephone alert system will receive a test call between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. during the week of Oct. 30-Nov. 3.

You don't have to be home during the test. If you have any questions or do not receive a test call that week, please contact us at **754-3360**.

Please Note: If you're not a system subscriber, you will **not** receive a test call. See article on the right to find out how to subscribe. It's free!

Sample Alert Message

This is Thurston County Emergency Management with an important message about the Deschutes River. Today is Monday, April 30; 1 p.m. The gage near Rainier registered nine feet at noon. It's expected to reach flood stage, 11 feet, by 6 p.m. Residents should be prepared to take steps to protect life and property on short notice.



Weather Radio: Stay Tuned

Want to receive up-to-the-minute advisories from the National Weather Service around the clock? Pre-tuned, battery-powered weather radios can be purchased from most electronic stores, beginning at about \$30. Top models feature S.A.M.E. technology, an automatic alert that can be programmed to sound alerts for selected conditions in selected areas.

Broadcast Information

Frequency: 162.475 MH; Channel 4
S.A.M.E. Code: 053067
Questions? Call 754-3360



Dear Neighbor,

We have sent you this information because your property is in the 100-year floodplain or in one of the groundwater flooding areas in Thurston County.

A guiding principle of emergency managers is the "72 Hour" rule. Disasters can be so overwhelming that demand may exceed available resources, leaving citizens on their own sometimes for days before outside help can arrive.

As citizens, we must be prepared to help ourselves and prevent hardship during emergencies. This bulletin is intended to help you with flood fighting information.

Your Telephone Alert System

Thurston County Emergency Management offers a telephone alert system to let floodplain residents know of impending flood information.

Activation

The system is only activated when, in the opinion of Emergency Management, a level of warning above and beyond that provided by the National Weather Service and the media is needed to recommend residents take action to protect life or property (sample message, left).

How it works

County staff records a brief message onto a computer which places calls to subscribers. When you pick up your phone, our system plays the message. If you have an answering machine, our system waits for a prompting tone, and plays the message for your recorder. If there is no answer on your line after about eight rings, the system will hang up and call the next number on the list. After about a 15-minute interval, it will try again, then a third time if necessary.

How to subscribe

Give us your name, residential address, mailing address (if different), the name of the river in your area, and the telephone numbers you would like us to contact with emergency notifications. You can mail, phone, fax, or subscribe on-line at:

Thurston County Emergency Management
2703 Pacific Avenue SE, Suite B
Olympia, WA 98501-2036
Phone (360) **754-3360**; Fax (360) 704-2775
On-line form: www.co.thurston.wa.us/em/phone



Important Notice: Alert System Limitations

Several Caller ID features such as anonymous call rejection and security screen, can interfere with receipt of emergency notifications. If you use any call screening devices, contact Emergency Management for more information.

Flood Insurance: Protect Your Home!

One of the saddest stories to emerge from the aftermath of Katrina was the shock thousands of homeowners experienced when they discovered that damages caused by the ensuing floods were **not** covered in their standard insurance policies. The lesson: The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is the *only* dependable financial protection against flood damage.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Federal disaster aid will reimburse me for property loss. Won't it?

No. FEMA aid is only available when the president declares a disaster. Not all floods, even those causing thousands of dollars of damage, are federally declared disasters. Federal aid may often be in the form of a loan that you must pay back with interest. Flood insurance policies pay claims whether or not a disaster is declared.



2. My home was previously flooded. Will I be able to buy flood insurance? **Yes.**

3. Is flood insurance only available to homeowners?

No. Flood insurance is also available to farm and commercial structures. Content coverage is available to renters as well.

4. Are there any requirements about rebuilding my home if damaged by flood?

NFIP requires that if the cost of reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition or other improvements to your home equals or exceeds 50% of the building's market value, then the building must meet the same construction requirements as a new building. Call the county's Development Services office at 786-5490.

5. Where do I purchase it?

National Flood Insurance, a federal program, is sold through many private insurance companies. If you have a problem purchasing flood insurance through your agent, call the NFIP at 1-888-379-9531. See www.floodsmart.gov for more information.

Good News!

Through mitigation and preparedness actions, Thurston County has earned a **25% discount** for flood insurance rates available to residents in the unincorporated areas. This translates into an average annual savings of \$95 per property.



Act Today!

There is a 30-day waiting period* after the first premium is paid before the policy is effective.

*Congress mandated the 30-day waiting period to prevent the purchase of flood insurance just before a flood hits. Before the rule, homeowners in high-risk areas such as the Gulf Coast could play "hurricane roulette" by letting their policies expire when forecasts were good and then re-upping days before a hurricane was expected.

Evacuation Do's and Don't's

Do not—

- Walk through flowing water. Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet.
- Drive on flooded roads. If you can't see the road under the water, don't drive it! As little as 18 inches of water can float a small car. If your vehicle stalls in high water, abandon it quickly and climb to higher ground.
- Drive around road barriers: the road or bridge may be washed out.

Do—

- Prepare a "to-go" bag with essential items such as food, water, medications, a flashlight and battery-operated radio.
- Fill your vehicle's gas tank.
- Develop an exit strategy that includes at least two additional reliable sources of transportation--a friend, relative or other means.
- Tell a friend or relative when you leave home and where you're going.
- Shut off power. • Take copies of important documents.



Afterwards

- Watch your step! Ground and floors can be covered with broken glass, nails and other debris. Wear sturdy boots, gloves and other protective gear.
- Be aware of toxins in floodwaters. If floodwater pools around your well casing or enters through the vents, treat the water as contaminated. Do not drink it! Get it tested as soon as possible. Details at the county's Health Department at 786-5490.
- Discard any food that may have come in contact with flood water.
- Be alert for gas leaks. Inspect damage with a flashlight. Don't smoke, use candles, lanterns or open flames unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.
- Take care of yourself! Drink plenty of water, eat nutritiously and don't overexert yourself.

Flood Warning System



The National Weather Service (NWS) issues watches and warnings when forecasts or models indicate that rivers may approach full bank levels.

Local media broadcast NWS warnings. The local Emergency Alert System is KGY at 1240 AM and 96.9 FM.

Flood Info on the Web

Check the Emergency Management website at www.co.thurston.wa.us/em for flood-related media advisories and links to NWS warnings and USGS real-time river gage readings. Maps of flooding on specific properties as well as maps of 100-year floodplains are available at www.geodata.org

Watch? Warning?

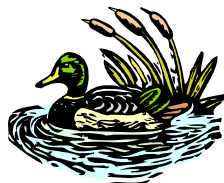
A “flood watch” means the risk of a flood has risen significantly, but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. A watch is generally issued 12-36 hours before a potential event.

A “warning” means a flood is imminent, generally within 12 hours, or is occurring. When a watch is issued, prepare for the possibility of a flood. When a warning is issued, stay tuned to a local station for advisories.

Keep the Channels Clean!

Good drainage helps reduce flooding. The county’s Roads and Transportation Services Department monitors and clears ditches and culverts throughout the year, with a special emphasis on problem areas in the rainy, winter months.

Remember it’s against the law to dump trash, brush, Christmas trees, tires or other materials into ditches or other waterways. Help prevent flooding by raking leaves out of street gutters and stormdrains. If you know of a clogged roadside ditch or culvert in your area, please report it to Roads Maintenance at 786-5495.



Engineers, the probable frequency of a groundwater flooding disaster is once every 25 years.

Historically, flooding occurs along one or more of the county’s rivers each year. The following are threshold marks for the area’s four major rivers.

Nisqually: The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a flood *warning* (see article on flood alerts, left) when their forecast model indicates the river will reach a stage of 12 feet or higher at the McKenna gage.

Skookumchuck: NWS flood warning: forecasted river stage of 13.5 at the Bucoda gage. Low-lying flooding in Thurston County occurs at a height of 15 feet; major flooding at 17 feet.

Chehalis: NWS flood warning: forecasted stage at 14 feet at the Grand Mound gage. Major flooding occurs when gage reaches 17.5 feet.

Deschutes: NWS warning: forecasted stage at 11 feet. The Deschutes rises and falls at a faster rate than any other county river. Major flooding occurs when the flow exceeds 13.5 feet at the Vail Loop Bridge.



Floods--Who Needs Them?

Floods and floodplains are as essential to our ecosystem as salmon and forests. A natural phenomenon, floods play an important role in our environment. The county’s watersheds support the rich and diverse bird, fish and animal life that we value in the Northwest. Many species of mammals, birds and fish live in plant communities dependent upon wetlands and floodplains. Other benefits include:

- ❖ Maintenance of water quality by filtering sediments, nutrients and impurities.
- ❖ Preservation and recharge of the groundwater supply (nearly all county residents rely on groundwater for our drinking water).
- ❖ Support of natural and indigenous vegetation.
- ❖ Recreation and education such as the Nisqually wildlife refuge.
- ❖ Floodplains and wetlands are natural buffers that prevent widespread flooding.

Let’s preserve natural areas by keeping human activities out of the way of rivers that will inevitably move. If you’d like to improve and maintain the health of our streams and other waterways consider joining Thurston County’s volunteer Stream Team. Details at 357-2491.

5 Things You Can Do To Protect Your Home

1. Elevate or relocate furnaces, water heaters, appliances and electrical panels. Better yet, elevate your home above flood elevation on a new foundation.
2. Install back-flow valves or plugs for drains, toilets and other sewer connections to prevent floodwaters from entering your home.
3. Make openings in foundation walls to allow water to flow in and out. This can help prevent collapse of the walls.
4. Build and install flood shields for doors and other openings to prevent the entrance of floodwaters. Details at Development Services.
5. Store hazardous materials like paint, pesticides and fertilizers off the floor. Take unwanted hazardous materials to the HazoHouse. Details at 786-5457 or www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm.

Call the county's Development Services office at **786-5490** for more details.

Want up-to-the-minute emergency and preparedness information?

Check out our website at: www.co.thurston.wa.us/em

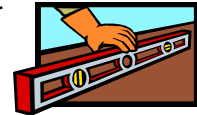
For the latest weather information see: www.weather.gov/Seattle

Building? Be Safe, not Sorry!

The county regulates floodplain development to protect the public and minimize flood losses. We require that homes vulnerable to floods include flood protection at construction. We also restrict the building of new structures within the 100-year floodplain with limited exceptions.

Regulations control filling, tree cutting, grading, and other development which may increase flood damage. Information on development affecting individual lots in our floodplains or in high groundwater areas is available at the county's Development Services. Information is also available at www.co.thurston.wa.us/wwm

Staff can also visit your property to answer questions specific to your site. The county also has limited historical data regarding flooding in unincorporated Thurston County. Call **786-5490** for complete details.



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