

APRIL SHOWERS BRING MORE THAN JUST FLOWERS

BY: Melissa Jeremiah, RN

Director of Hoosier Uplands Home Health and Hospice

Most everyone has heard the saying, “April Showers Bring May Flowers!” But, how many of you are prepared for the other things Spring Showers may bring, such as floods and flash floods?

What should I do ahead of time?

- 1. Discuss with family the definitions using when speaking about floods. A flood watch means a flood is possible in your area and you should remain alert for approaching storms. A warning means flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area and you initiate your flood plan. A flash flood is a sudden, violent flood and one in which you should initiate your flood plan.**
- 2. Learn ahead of time whether you live in a flood-prone area from you local insurance agent. You should ask if your property is in or outside a special flood hazard area.**
- 3. You should plan and practice an evacuation route. You can contact your local emergency management office for a copy of the community flood evacuation plan. If you live in a flash-flood area you should have several evacuation routes.**
- 4. Prepare a disaster kit, which includes the following items:**
 - A. Water for each person in your household.**
 - B. Non-perishable foods that do not have to be prepared or cooked. If these foods are canned, include a non-electric can opener.**
 - C. A first-aid kit and manual, including necessary prescription medications.**
 - D. Tools and supplies: flashlights, a portable battery-operated radio, cell phone or CB, extra batteries, wrench (to turn off gas and water), clothing and bedding, sturdy shoes and cash and credit cards.**
 - E. Special items: for baby - formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk
for adult - contact lenses and supplies, extra glasses**
- 5. In case family members are separated from one another during a flood or flash flood you should have a plan for meeting back up with one another. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the “family contact.” After a diaster, it’s often easier to make long distance calls. Make sure everyone in your family knows the name, address and phone number of the contact person.**
- 6. Teach all family members how to turn off gas, electric and water. Teach children how to call for emergency help and which radio station to turn to for emergency information.**
- 7. Keep your insurance policies in a safe place. Ask your agent about flood insurance. Don’t delay if you have questions about flood insurance, as there is a 30 day waiting period.**

What should I do during a flood watch?

- 1. Remind family members of your flood plan and continue to listen to the radio or television for further developments.**
- 2. Fill bathtubs, sink and jugs with clean water, in case the local water supply**

becomes contaminated.

3. Bring outdoor belongings, such as lawn furniture, indoors. Move valuable household possessions to upper floors or to safe ground, if time permits.
5. If you are instructed to do so by local authorities, turn off all utilities at the main switch and close the main gas valve.
6. Gather your preassembled emergency supplies.
7. Be prepared to evacuate. Evacuate immediately, if advised to do so. Taking your pets with you. Follow recommended evacuation routes, shortcuts may be blocked.

What should I do during a flood if I am in a car or outdoors?

Many people have died trying to move a stalled vehicle or trying to drive through high water!

1. If you are in a car and come to a flooded area, turn around and go another way.
2. If your car stalls, abandon it immediately.
3. If you have to abandon your car or are outdoors for other reasons climb to high ground and stay there.
4. Avoid walking through any floodwaters. Even 6 inches of swiftly moving water can sweep you off your feet.

What should I do after a flood?

1. Stay out of a damaged building. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
2. Wear sturdy shoes and take battery powered lanterns or flashlights to examine the damage. Do not use matches or other open flames, do not turn on any appliances or switches, including phones or cell phones because gas could be trapped inside.
3. Take pictures of the damage-both to the house and contents-for insurance purposes.
4. Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes, that may have come into your home with the floodwaters. Use a stick to poke through debris.
5. Look for fire hazards, such as broken or leaking gas lines, flooded electrical circuits, submerged furnaces or appliances and flammable or explosive materials that may have come from upstream. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, leave the building immediately. Turn off the gas at the main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbors house. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned on by a professional. Keep power off until the electrical system has been inspected. If you see sparks or broken or frayed lines, or smell hot insulation, call an electrician.
6. Throw away food, including canned goods, that has come in contact with floodwater.
7. Have damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible, by a plumber. If sewage lines are damaged do not use the toilet. Damaged sewage systems are health hazards. If water pipes are damaged contact the water company and avoid using water from tap.

Information for this article was obtained from the FEMA website, www.fema.gov.