

Flood Awareness Month – PODCAST 14: Preparing for Floods

RUN TIME: 4 MIN, 12 SECONDS

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LUCINDA: There are things that Iowans can do before, during and after a flood. Stefanie, can you tell us a little bit more about some things that Iowans should consider before we actually see flooding?

STEFANIE: Well, first of all you mentioned that you need to be aware of the hazards in your community. One of those is flood hazards. Are you in a flood-prone area? Do you know the flood warning signs and the community alert signals, so that you know if a flood should happen how to receive that information. Second, there are things that you can do with your family – like the emergency supply kit and the family emergency plan, of course. Also make a catalog of your belongings, because if your home is damaged in a flood, that's going to be essential for the insurance company going back through and determining the value of your home and your belongings. Taking a photo of all of your belongings is also a good idea to go along with that. And if you go to "Don't Test The Waters Iowa" dot gov, there is a link to a website where you can put together an inventory of your home items for free. And there are many other links on that website that have to do with flooding, generally, preparedness, and the National Flood Insurance Program.

LUCINDA: That sounds like a very handy resource. Can you tell us the website address again?

STEFANIE: It's W-W-W, dot "Don't Test The Waters Iowa," dot gov. When you're putting together that inventory list, make sure that you keep it in a safe place. Perhaps you can have one copy of it at home and one copy of it in a safe deposit box.

LUCINDA: You may also want to ask your family contact, who is part of your family emergency plan, to keep a copy of that list for you.

STEFANIE: Exactly. Now during a flood, there are some things that you will also need to pay attention to. Lucinda already mentioned that you should have a NOAA weather radio so can get the latest emergency information – and make sure you've got batteries in that radio. And also, with your pre-assembled emergency supplies – you need to be able to grab those at a moment's notice. But if you're outdoors and there's a flood – first of all, you need to climb to higher ground or drive to higher ground and stay there, if you can drive without driving through flood waters. It's best if you avoid walking through flood waters and driving through flood waters, because even 6 inches of swiftly-moving water can knock you off your feet and sweep your car away. If you're in a car and you come to a flooded area, turn around and go the other way. Easy way to remember that is "Turn around – don't drown." If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground. If you're advised to evacuate, do so immediately because evacuation, of course, is simpler and safer before flood waters have become too deep to drive through. And, make sure you leave early enough to avoid being trapped by flood waters.

Now after a flood there are things you need to pay attention to. Lucinda, what are some of those things?

LUCINDA: If we know that our home has been affected by a flood, it's natural to want to return to find out what has happened. But don't return home until the authorities have indicated that it's safe to do so because there may be some safety hazards. Once you do return home, there are a few things that you need to do. Inspect the foundations for damage. Stay out of the buildings if flood waters remain around

the building. If you do go into a building, use caution – wear sturdy shoes, and use battery-powered flashlights. Examine the walls, doors, floors and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing. Watch out for animals – especially poisonous snakes – that may have come in with the flood waters. Use a stick to poke through debris. And very, very important, is to take photos of damage to the house and its contents for your insurance claims. Once you reenter your home, throw away food – including canned goods – that has come into contact with flood waters. Pump out flooded basements gradually – approximately one-third of the water per day – to avoid structural damage. Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible, as they are health hazards. But the most important thing to remember when returning to your home after flood, is to be safe. And if you have questions, ask the authorities in your area for assistance.

It's important to be prepared for a flood before it happens, so go to [Be Ready, dot Iowa, dot gov](http://BeReady.iowa.gov), for more information on actions you and your family can take.

STEFANIE: It's better to be prepared than be caught unaware.

LUCINDA: It's better to be safe than sorry.

STEFANIE: Thanks a lot!

LUCINDA: Thank you!