



Earth Gauge™ - Flood Safety Awareness Week

Environmental Information for Broadcast Meteorologists

National Flood Safety Awareness Week is March 19 – 23, 2007!

A flood is excess water or mudflow over land that is normally dry. Floods can be caused by severe thunderstorms, slow moving tropical storms, unusually fast snowmelt, and ice jams. When flood waters rise gradually, people living in harms way usually have time to react. On the other hand, flash floods, which are particularly common in arid regions, can strike quickly and without warning.

Since 1950, America's population has nearly doubled. At the same time, better technology and warning systems have helped to reduce the number of fatalities from most weather hazards by 50 percent. The average annual death toll from floods, however, has grown slightly to more than 100 people, making floods the number one cause of weather related deaths. This rise can be attributed to several factors, including:

- Growing populations in flood prone areas;
- More paved surfaces – storm water runs off these surfaces, instead of soaking into the ground;
- Loss of wetlands, which buffer land areas by absorbing flood water; and
- Aging dams and levees.

Despite all of these factors, most flood-related deaths are preventable and occur when people try to cross flooded roadways. It only takes two feet of rushing water to carry away most vehicles, including pick-ups and SUV's, and less than six inches of rushing water to topple an adult on foot. Because it is difficult to know the depth of the rushing water and the condition of the ground underneath, it is never advisable to attempt to cross streams or flooded roadways, on foot or in a vehicle.



Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



NOAA

Following these tips can help to ensure your safety in the event of a flood:

- **Check your local weather forecast** frequently for alerts on potential flood hazards. NOAA Weather Radios, which announce alerts when they happen, can be purchased as well.
- **Know your flood risk** by visiting floodsmart.gov.
- **Create a flood evacuation plan.** Know how to get to higher ground, and make sure your evacuation route does not include low-lying roads that may be flooded. Everyone in the household should know this plan.
- **Remember that even moderate floods can cause structural damage to your home.** Depending on where you live, you may want to purchase flood insurance. Learn more at floodsmart.gov.

For more information visit:

National Weather Service Flood Safety Awareness Page: <http://www.floodsafety.noaa.gov>

Flood Smart: <http://www.floodsmart.gov/>

Federal Alliance for Safe Homes: <http://www.flash.org>

Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Page: <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/index.shtm>

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