



Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Flood Protection Information



Mapped floodplains in Forsyth County comprise over 18,000 acres of land and represent more than 7% of the total land area. If you are in the floodplain, the odds are that, someday, your property will be damaged. Even if you are not in a floodplain you may experience flooding. Area drainage problems may cause flooding on local streets and in residential neighborhoods. Inundation flooding occurs when the amount of rainfall and runoff exceeds a storm water system's (ditch or sewer) capability to remove it.

This flyer will give you some idea of what you can do to protect yourself.



Know your flood hazard.

- The State of North Carolina, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Cooperating Technical Community partnership initiative, has been designated as a Cooperating Technical State (CTS). As a CTS, the state assumes primary ownership and responsibility for Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for all North Carolina communities. This project includes conducting flood hazard analysis and producing updated, digital FIRMs (DFIRMs). The updated flood hazard data provides current, accurate information for communities and property owners to make sound design decisions when building new structures and infrastructure and when retrofitting existing structures. This new data became effective in all of Forsyth County on January 2, 2009. Visit www.em.cityofws.org for more information regarding the effect that revised maps have on existing structures and flood insurance requirements.
- Flood protection references are available in the North Carolina Room at the Central Branch of the Forsyth County Public Library. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs/DFIRMs) can be viewed on the internet at www.ncfloodmaps.com or by choosing the Geo-Data Explorer link on the Forsyth County website at www.co.forsyth.nc.us Every Forsyth County Public Library location provides free computer and internet services.
- Identify dams and levees in your area.
- You may visit the Building Inspections Department in Winston-Salem at the Stuart Municipal Building (100 East First Street) for map information concerning past flood problems in the area and view copies of elevation certificates of buildings built in the floodplain since 1993. You may also talk with a floodplain manager in the Building Inspections Department by contacting City Link at 727-8000. A floodplain manager will be able to provide information regarding your flood problems, or potential flood problems, and explain ways to prevent flood damage to your property. These services are free of charge.

Know your flood warning system.

- Radio stations WZTK – FM (101.1) and WTQR – FM (104.1) receive and broadcast emergency messages and relay these messages to other local radio and TV stations.
- The best way to receive emergency notification and information is to have a NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) Weather Radio in your home and workplace. The National Weather Service (NWS) or local officials will immediately activate the Emergency Alert System (EAS) when a weather-related or other emergency is expected or is occurring in or near your location. Forsyth County's broadcast frequency is 162.400 MHz. A NOAA Weather Radio may be purchased at discount and department stores that sell electronics.

Weather Alert Terminology:

- Flood Watch – means life-threatening flooding is possible
- Flood Warning – means life-threatening flooding is imminent



Protect yourself, your family and your pets from flood waters.

- Listen to the TV, radio or NOAA Weather Radio for watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service and be ready to evacuate with your family, pets and disaster supply kit and follow all emergency instructions.
- Do not walk through flood waters. Currents can be deceptive and six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. Flood waters may be contaminated with sewage and flood-related chemical spills.
- Do not drive through a flooded area. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Do not drive around barriers, the road or bridge may be washed out.
- Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. During floods, the number two killer after drowning is electrocution. Have the power company turn your electricity off.
- Look out for animals, especially snakes. Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to turn things over and scare away small animals.
- Be alert for gas leaks. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns, or open flames unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.
- Water for drinking and food preparation should be boiled vigorously for ten minutes until the public water system or your private well has been declared safe.
- Actions to take now, for insurance purposes, include making an itemized list of all your personal property (furnishings, clothing and valuables) and taking pictures or videos of your home (inside and out) and its contents. Keep your insurance policies, pictures or video tapes and lists of your personal property in a safe, dry place.
- After a flood event and damage to your property, immediately call the agent or broker who services your flood insurance policy. All damaged items should be kept for inspection by your insurance adjuster. Take pictures of the damage done to your property, home and its contents.

Use property protection measures

- To increase the safety of your property and reduce insurance premiums, you should consider building to higher standards. Of course, the most effective and permanent means of protecting your structure from flood damage is to locate it outside of the floodplain. If you are unable to relocate your structure, the next most effective means is to elevate your structure above the base flood elevation (BFE).
- If a flood is imminent, some last minute emergency measures can help, including sandbagging areas where water might enter living spaces and moving valuables and furniture to upper floors or higher elevations. Whatever emergency protection measures you use, it is always best to have a written plan to ensure you don't forget anything after the flood warning is issued.

Follow the flood protection regulations that are designed to protect you and your neighbors

- Always check with the Building Inspections Department before you build on, fill, alter or regrade your property. A permit is needed to ensure that such projects do not cause problems on other properties. If you see building or filling without a permit sign posted, contact the Building Inspections Department (via City Link at 727-8000).
- Every piece of trash or debris can contribute to flooding. Even grass clippings and branches can accumulate and plug channels. If your property is next to a ditch or storage basin, please do your part and keep the banks clear of brush and debris.
- Do not dump or throw anything into the ditches or basins. This is a violation of City Ordinance 4356, Chapter 75, Section 6. If you observe any intentional illegal dumping in ditches, streams, or drainage facilities in the City of Winston-Salem, report this to City Link at 727-8000.



- New buildings in the floodplain must be protected from flood damage and are required by building code to be elevated one foot above the base flood level.
- If a building has undergone substantial improvements, it must be treated as a new building. A substantial improvement is when the value of an addition, alteration, repair or reconstruction project exceeds 50% of the value of the existing building. In the case of an addition, only the addition must be protected. In the case of an improvement to the original building, the entire building must be protected. Also, if a house in the floodplain is flooded, has a fire, is hit by a tornado, or is otherwise damaged so that the cost of repairs is more than 50% of the value of the building before the damage, then the house must be elevated one foot above the base flood level.

Purchase flood insurance for coverage of your structure and contents

- Homeowner's insurance does not include flood protection. Therefore, the city of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which is backed by the federal government and available to everyone, even for properties that have been flooded in the past. If you do not have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent for more information, rates and coverage.
- Make sure you have a policy that provides coverage for both structure and contents. Most flood insurance policies only provide for structural coverage, but there is usually more damage to contents during a flood. Homeowners, as well as renters, may purchase contents coverage.
- Do not wait for the next flood to buy insurance protection. There is a 30 day waiting period before National Flood Insurance coverage takes effect.
- FEMA hazard mitigation grants are available to assist communities in implementing measures to reduce or eliminate the loss of life and/or long-term risk of flood damage to structures insured under the NFIP. Eligibility is based on set criteria and the grants are nationally competitive. For more information contact City Link at 727-8000.

Understand the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains

- Floodplains are more than just hazardous locations for human development; they should be seen in their natural context. Open and natural areas absorb much more rain and floodwater than urbanized areas, reducing flood flows on downstream properties. Wetland plants filter stormwater runoff, making it cleaner for those downstream. These flood prone areas are also used by a variety of wildlife and provide habitat for species that can not live or breed anywhere else.
- Help Winston-Salem and Forsyth County maintain high water quality. The storm drain system carries untreated stormwater runoff into our streams. Pouring wastes into storm drains directly impacts our environment. Oil, anti-freeze, paint, fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides and other contaminants pollute the water, destroy plants and endanger wildlife. One quart of oil can contaminate 250,000 gallons of water. Help keep our streams and storm drains free of pollutants and report violators within Winston-Salem city limits to City Link at 727-8000 and violators within Forsyth County (outside Winston-Salem city limits) to Environmental Affairs at 703-2440.

