

This week has been declared North Carolina's Severe Weather Awareness Week for 2011.

Today's topic will be flooding. Flood related deaths are a serious nationwide problem. Nationwide...**flooding causes more fatalities than any other type of severe weather. Several factors contribute to flooding.** The two main factors are the intensity of rainfall and how long rain occurs over any given location. Urbanization, topography, soil type and soil moisture also play roles in the severity of flood conditions.

Flooding in North Carolina can result from several different weather situations. Slow moving thunderstorms can repeatedly move over the same location resulting in rapid flash flooding...or days of steady rain can also cause creeks and rivers to flood over large areas. In general, any thunderstorm moving across metropolitan or urbanized areas can cause flash flooding due to the amount of runoff generated by highly developed areas.

Rushing water in the form of a flash flood can quickly become deadly. Just a few inches of fast-moving flood water can knock you off of your feet while just one to two feet of moving water can overtake a car forcing it off the road. The combination of the force of flowing water and the buoyancy of a vehicle can make driving into flood waters extremely dangerous. Just one foot of water will float most cars and wash them away downstream. **Most flood deaths occur in automobiles.** When approaching water flowing over the road, turn around and go the other way. **Turn around...don't drown.**

Flooding is dangerous any time of day, but most dangerous at night when it is difficult to see. In many cases drivers come upon flooded areas and drive into flood waters faster than they can react. Limited visibility at night makes it not only more difficult to see flood waters, but also nearly impossible to gage water depth. In many cases drivers who enter the water severely misjudge the depth and strength of the flood waters. Once a vehicle or person is washed downstream, rescue can be difficult and puts even more people at risk.

Knowing your area's flood risk at home and work is also very important. Check your homeowner's or renter's insurance. Many policies do not cover flooding and many areas across North Carolina are subject to flooding although not officially declared within a flood plain. Just because flood damage is not in your insurance policy does not mean your house cannot flood. Evaluate your flood risk NOW and know where you will go if you need to evacuate. Have an alternate escape route, just in case your primary escape route becomes flooded. Just because areas around your home have never flooded before does not mean you will never experience a flood. Always be careful driving during or just after periods of heavy rain.

When flooding is possible, the National Weather Service will issue a Flood Watch. This tells you to remain alert to the possibility of heavy rain and flooding. Once a flash flood warning is issued, then it is time to take action. When a warning is issued for your area, it means that flooding has been reported or is imminent. This is the time to closely monitor the situation and move quickly if flood waters threaten.

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Move to a safe location before access is cut off by flood waters. Never allow children to play around high water, creeks, streams or storm drains.

When heavy rain and flooding threatens your area, stay informed by listening to NOAA weather radio, local television and radio.

More flood safety information can be found online by visiting

<http://floodsafety.noaa.gov>

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<http://tadd.weather.gov/>

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