



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Rainfall warnings and flooding

When there are heavy rains, there is an increased risk of flooding. Below is a list of several potential actions you can take to help protect yourself, your family and your community.



**MAKE A PLAN**



**BUILD A KIT**



**BE INFORMED**

Emergency situations can be stressful and take an emotional toll on individuals and communities. Consider what activities your community and culture bring you comfort and how these may be integrate into your response planning. Visit [here](#) for FNHA wellness supports. More resources can be found at the end of this document.

## Before Flooding

- Create an Emergency Plan
- Choose an Emergency Meeting Place
- Plan how to communicate, and create a written phone list, including medical contacts
- Research insurance coverage
- [Create a grab and go bag](#)
- Protect your home from flooding through preventative tasks such as clearing gutters.
- Ensure you have charging cables for your electronic devices, including a portable charging kit.

## During Flood Warning

- Monitor local news media and the [Government of BC's flood warning website](#) for flooding status.
- Follow evacuation instructions given by community or emergency officials.
- Turn off power to well pumps so flood water is not drawn into the well.
- Keep at least a 72-hour supply of clean drinking water and food on-hand in case supplies are impacted.
- Sandbag around surface water intakes to protect from damage caused by debris.
- Move as many items as possible from basements and crawl spaces to higher floors.

## During Flooding

- Stay away from flood waters and fast-moving rivers
- Follow instructions given by first responders and other emergency personnel
- If flood waters cover your sewage disposal field, stop using the sewage system
- If power goes out, keep the door closed on the fridge/freezer and keep food inside it. This will help keep food safe (up to about 12 hours for a fridge, 24 hours for a half-full freezer, and up to 48 hours for a full freezer)
- Wash hands with soap and water if you come in contact with flood water. It could be contaminated

For more information on these points, PreparedBC has [created a guide on flooding](#) and other hazards.

## After Flooding

- Check with community or emergency officials before returning home
- If you have a well and the well head is flooded, contact your community health centres, environmental health officer or Environmental Public Health Services at 1-844-666-0711 or [environmental.health@fnha.ca](mailto:environmental.health@fnha.ca) / [ephs.afterhours@fnha.ca](mailto:ephs.afterhours@fnha.ca)
- Assess your food to see if it has come into contact with flood waters. It is hard to make food safe to eat once it has been exposed to contaminated water. Please see below on food safety after a flood.

## Surface Water Supplies

- Use extreme caution when working around creeks and rivers. Flowing water can present a drowning hazard in some situations.
- Protect your water supply and the water supplies of downstream users by moving all pesticides, chemicals (including disinfectants for water treatment) and other contaminants to a safe location so they don't get flushed away or dissolve in flood waters.
- Protect private surface water intakes by placing sandbags around them. This may reduce damage during a flood when debris in streams may be greater than normal.

## Wells

- If you have a domestic well, ensure that your wellhead is protected with a surface seal and a cap. A [registered well-driller](#) is required to do this work.
- You can either store bottled water, which can be purchased from the store in advance, or fill clean plastic jugs or other containers from the tap.

## Food Safety after a Flood

### If exposed to flood waters, destroy:

- Foods packaged in containers that are not waterproof
- Bottled drinks and home preserves, which may be difficult to clean & sanitize under caps, lids or sealing rings
- Canned goods that appear to have a broken seal or show signs of bloating or seepage
- Any previously-opened packaged foods

### Commercially-canned foods in good condition may be salvaged by:

- Removing the label
- Washing the can in warm soapy water and then rinsing
- Sanitizing in a solution of 40 mL of regular household bleach in 1 litre of water (approx. 5 ounces or 10 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water)
- Marking the contents on the food container if it will not be used right away

### Discard food that:

- Is unpackaged and was exposed to flood waters, including fresh fruit and vegetables
- Was not temperature controlled (warmer than 4C for more than 2 hours), whether or not it was exposed to flood water)
- Is considered higher-risk, including: cooked grains, cooked vegetables, dairy products, eggs, meat and poultry, seafood

## Additional Resources

[Healthlink BC - Water borne infections](#)

[Healthlink BC - Well Water Testing](#)

[Healthlink BC - Caring for seniors in long term care in an emergency](#)

[Healthlink BC - Community evacuation for seniors](#)

[Healthlink BC - Clean up after a flood](#)

[Healthlink BC - Flooding and your health](#)

[Water Well Disinfection](#)

[FNHA Assessment of Septic Systems After a Flood](#)