FLOOD SAFETY AWARENESS

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters in terms of human hardship and economic loss. Each year, an average of 110 lives are lost and over $4.6 billion in damages occur. To reduce the economic and social impacts associated with floods, the State Climatology Office and the Flood Mitigation Program in the S.C. Department of Natural Resources offer tips designed to meet the recommendations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (*www. fema.gov*) and the National Weather Service (*www.weather.gov*). (See sidebar, opposite.)

Flood types are determined based on the duration of the event and the amount of time available to respond to the imminent hazardous weather conditions. Flooding is a more general term indicating widespread and longer duration events while flash floods are typically associated with heavy precipitation that occurs within a six-hour period making them more difficult to forecast. For example, on July 29, 2004, residents along the Reedy River in Greenville County were surprised by an incredible flash flood event after six to eight inches of rain fell in less than three hours near the town of Berea. Thirty homes were completely destroyed and another 100 homes and businesses sustained significant damage. Damage estimates for roads and bridges totaled over $5.8 million. During Hurricane Floyd in 1999, 12 to 18 inches of rain fell across parts of eastern North Carolina and northeastern South Carolina, creating floods that persisted for more than four weeks and reached 500-year flood levels. The total economic loss from this event exceeded $5 billion between the two states.

S.C. Flood Mitigation Program

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www.srh.weather.gov

S.C. Flood Mitigation Program

Monitor the weather using the NOAA Weather Radio or reliable, local media stations for watches and warnings from the National Weather Service.

Move to higher ground and evacuate flood-prone areas prior to the impending flood.

Avoid flooded areas and do not travel across flooded roadways. As the National Weather Service recommends, "Turn Around, Don't Drown!"

Make a disaster supply kit including flashlights, batteries, radio, first aid kit, non-perishable food items, bottled water, medications, and cash/credit cards.

If you live in a flood-prone area, add building materials to your supply kit for sandbagging and retainer wall construction to protect your home or business.

Purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).