

Preventing Flood Damage

Your local floodplain manager, building official, city engineer, or planning and zoning administrator can typically tell you whether you are in a flood or other hazard area. Your local community official is also a good source of information on how to protect yourself, your house, and property from flooding and other hazards.

Ways to protect your house and property

Basement flood protection can involve a variety of changes to your house and property—changes that can vary in complexity and cost. You may be able to make some types of changes yourself.

Complicated or large-scale changes or those that affect the structure of your house or its electrical wiring and plumbing should be carried out only by a professional contractor licensed to work in your state, county, or city.

Some methods of flood protection include:

- **Install Sewer Backflow Valves.** In some flood prone areas, flooding can cause sewage from sanitary sewer lines to back up into houses through drainpipes. Sewage backup not only causes damage, but also creates health hazards. Backflow valves have a variety of designs ranging from simple to complex. This is something that only a licensed plumber or contractor should do.
- **Raise or Flood-Proof Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning Equipment.** In flood prone houses, a good way to protect HVAC equipment is elevating it above the areas that flood. Another method is building a concrete or masonry block flood wall around the current location.
- **Anchor Fuel Tanks.** Unanchored fuel tanks can be easily moved by floodwaters. One way to anchor a tank is attaching it to a large concrete slab whose weight is great enough to resist the force of floodwaters. Elevate tanks to a minimum of one foot above the base flood elevation. Floating and/or damaged tanks pose serious threats not only to you, your family, and your house, but also to public safety and the environment.
- **Raise Electrical System Components.** Any electrical system component, including service panels (fuse and circuit boxes), meters, switches, and outlets, can easily be damaged by floodwaters. All components of the electrical system, including the wiring, should be raised at least one foot above the base flood elevation.
- **Raise Washers and Dryers.** Washers and dryers can easily be damaged in a flood. To prevent this from happening, utilities can be placed on cinder blocks one foot above the base flood elevation.
- **Add a Sump Pump in Your Basement.** Sump pumps can help keep groundwater from entering your home's interior.
- **Cut Drywall so It's One-half to 1-inch Off the Floor.** This is especially important in basements. Concrete floors commonly absorb ground moisture—especially in winter months. The moisture can wick up the wallboard if it's touching the floor, allowing mold to grow out-of-sight within the walls. The gap can be hidden with wood or rubberized floor trim.
- **Don't Forget to Buy Flood Insurance.** Flood insurance provides year-round financial protection and improves your ability to quickly recover when severe storms strike and cause unexpected flooding. Call your local insurance agent or 1-800-720-1090 to reach National Flood Insurance Program specialists.

For additional information visit www.floodsmart.gov, the official website of the National Flood Insurance Program.