Scientists believe changing weather patterns may bring a greater number of rainstorms to New York City. These intense storms can lead to dangerous street flooding, cause sewers to back up into homes, and pose serious threats to health and property. While the City tries to manage storm water effectively, residents can also take some important steps to protect themselves.

BEFORE THE FLOOD

DETERMINE YOUR RISK

Low-lying coastal regions and first-floor and basement levels are naturally more at risk for flooding. To determine your home’s risk, visit www.floodsmart.gov.

MAKE A PLAN

- Provide your insurance agent, employer, and family members with emergency contact information so you can be reached after a flood, and fill out an Emergency Reference Card.
- Keep important documents, including insurance information, vehicle titles, and receipts for major appliances, in a waterproof container and elevated off the floor.
- Prepare a Go Bag full of items you may need if you must leave your home. To learn how to assemble a Go Bag, visit NYC.gov/readyny or call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115).

UNDERSTAND YOUR INSURANCE NEEDS

Flood damage is not covered by a basic homeowner’s policy. Protect your home by purchasing flood insurance. You cannot be denied insurance based on where you live or your home’s history of flooding. Most insurance is provided through the federal government’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and goes into effect 30 days after purchase.

To estimate your premium, or learn more about flood insurance, visit NFIP’s website, www.floodsmart.gov, or call (888) 379-9531.

GET INFORMED

OEM on Facebook and Twitter
www.facebook.com/NYCEmergencymanagement
@nycoem

Notify NYC
Register for emergency notifications by visiting NYC.gov/notifynyc, calling 311, or following @NotifyNYC on Twitter.
DURING THE FLOOD

- Call 911 immediately if your life or health is in danger (i.e., you see rapidly rising water that may reach the electrical system, you are stranded, etc.).
- Call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115) if your property is threatened (i.e., your basement or street is flooded, the sewer is backing up into your home, etc.).
- Move expensive items, important documents, and things of sentimental value to upper floors.
- Turn off gas and electrical utilities at the main switches or valves, and disconnect electrical appliances.
- Avoid walking or driving through flooded streets. As few as six inches of moving water can knock a person over. One to two feet of water can carry away a vehicle.
- Flood water can be contaminated. Avoid contact with sewer water, as it poses a serious health risk.
- Report any downed power lines and avoid standing in flood water, as it can carry electrical current.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.

Q: Is my water safe to drink during a flood?  
A: YES. As drinking water and sewage are carried in separate pipes, it is generally safe to drink your tap water during a flood or sewer back-up. 

After installation, inspect the valve periodically to make sure it works when you need it.

Ground Fault Interrupters (GFIs)
A ground fault interrupter (GFI) circuit connected to an electrical receptacle can prevent shock or electrocution during flooding. GFIs must be wired by a licensed electrician.

NOTE: To check if a plumber or electrician holds a valid license, visit NYC.gov/buildings or call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115). For any of these improvements, get quotes from multiple contractors.

Below Street-Level Property
If part of your property is below street level, consider strategies to keep storm water from flowing into your home, such as modifying slopes, adding green space, or installing physical barriers. Before or during heavy rain, remove debris from catch basins in your area to allow the water to enter. Pick up the leaves from your yard to keep them from clogging streets and catch basins. Keep materials, such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and lumber, on hand to protect your home, especially if you live in a flood-susceptible area.

For additional information about how you can protect your home and community from flooding, visit NYC.gov/dep or call 311 (TTY: 212-504-5115).

REDUCE YOUR RISK
Green Space
Trees, plants, and grass can help absorb rain water. When possible, plant vegetation and avoid paving over green space on your property. Visit www.milliontreesnyc.org or call 311 (TTY: 212-504-4115) to request a tree on your street.

Backwater Valves
A backwater valve can help prevent sewage from flowing from the pipes back into your home during heavy rain.

New York City building code requires valves for many new buildings and major renovations. The work must be done by a licensed plumber.

After installation, inspect the valve periodically to make sure it works when you need it.

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