

COMMUNITY FLOOD PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Solely relying on local authorities and emergency services during flood conditions is not always advisable – they may be over-stretched or unable to reach you. Having a household plan in place is essential in protecting your own property and family from flooding but by acting together as a community you can greatly influence the impact of a flood on your entire street or estate or community. A community flood plan should outline exactly who will do what when flooding is expected and during a flood. It should also hold all the information that would be needed during an emergency such as important contact details, evacuation routes and details of vulnerable people in your community who would need extra assistance. It is not intended to replace the work of the emergency services – it is intended to compliment those services in reducing the damage and trauma of flooding by helping people be better prepared.

Building community resilience is something that many people and communities already do without realising it, however having a flood plan will form an important part of how your community might best respond to a flood situation and it will prevent different people or groups doing the same thing. By building on existing local relationships and networks, using local knowledge and preparing for risks, your community will be better able to cope during and after a flood event. A flood resilient community will not only be better prepared to respond at the time of a flood, but will be better able to cope in the long-term. The community flood plan will assist the community in reducing the negative effects of a flood regardless of its source.

It is not about creating or identifying a whole new community network - there may already be a community group in your area such as a residents association, neighbourhood watch group or tidy towns committee who already have the skills in pulling together plans within their remit, so you may not have to establish a new group – you may instead wish to build on and use existing community groups and consider how they might build a community flood plan into their activities.

If a community group is not in existence already then a community flood group should be established prior to the development of a community flood plan.

No two communities are the same as each one may have different needs. The community group will need to gather local flood information, which can then be used to create the community flood plan. The flood plan should be maintained and practiced regularly. This document is a guide to help community groups to produce a community flood plan that best suits their community needs.

DUBLIN FLOOD FORUM

CREATING A FLOOD PLAN GROUP

In order to produce a community flood plan it is necessary to set structures in the community group allowing for the plan to be produced. The community group should appoint a flood plan group that includes a flood plan co-ordinator, a deputy flood plan co-ordinator and flood volunteers/wardens, with the following suggested roles:

Flood Plan Co-ordinator:

- Lead the development of the community flood plan
- Maintain the community flood plan to ensure it remains up to date
- Liaise with local resident association, the DCC Flood Forum and if appropriate the OPW
- Notify and liaise with the flood volunteers during an emergency
- Monitor any flood warnings

Deputy flood plan co-ordinator:

- Assist the co-ordinator in completing the above tasks
- Deputise for the co-ordinator in their absence

Flood volunteers/wardens:

- Participate in the development and maintenance of the community flood plan.
- Monitor local flood alerts.
- Advise and support the local community upon issue of flood warnings.
- Help put local response measures in place during an emergency.
- Ideally some volunteers should be from outside the flood risk area. They could be family or friends of people within the flood risk community. They are useful in providing help immediately as they won't be preoccupied with flood risks to their own homes and property.

The roles listed above are only suggestions on the structure of the flood group - your own community flood group should adapt these to suit your community needs. Once you have decided on your flood plan group they will need to decide when, where and how often to meet to develop the flood plan, maintain it, practice it and conduct any training that may be required.

CREATING A COMMUNITY FLOOD PLAN

A community flood plan is not about doing the job of the emergency services. It's about supporting your community and those in it by making sensible preparations and using the skills and knowledge that the community has. Putting it simply – it's about helping each other!

The whole idea of a community flood plan is to identify what actions you might take to limit the damage caused by floodwater in your community. The following gives ideas on how to develop a community flood plan:

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Raise awareness of the flood risks in your community:

- Householders and businesses should engage with the community group in forming the community flood plan. Working together as a community or group to complete a plan will help you respond quickly when flooding happens. It can help you decide what practical actions to take before and during a flood, helping reduce the damage flooding can cause. Don't wait until it happens, you may not have the time.
- Prior to a flood, the flood community group should promote awareness to householders within the community of the actions and responsibilities they have in regard to preparing, responding to and recovering from a flood.
- Householders should be encouraged to have their own property flood protection equipment and practice using it prior to a flood event - flood protection equipment is only useful when used according to manufacturers recommendations. More information on flood protection equipment is available on www.dublincity.ie/floodprotection in the Property Flood Protection Guide
- Householders should be encouraged to have their own personal household flood plan and to keep it up to date. A guide on preparing a household plan is available on www.dublincity.ie/floodprotection
- Householders should be encouraged to make their own provisions for the safety of any domestic pets prior to a flood event.

Identify the flood risks in your community:

- Gather local knowledge on how your community flooded in the past or how your community is likely to flood in the future.
- List all the properties within your community that are at risk of flooding. This can be checked on www.floodmaps.ie or from local knowledge.
- List where property other than homes were damaged by flooding (e.g. where gardens or cars were damaged by floodwater)
- List any other damage or risk your community encountered in previous floods
- These lists will help you to form a flood plan and enable the group to target resources to specific areas.

Identify vulnerable people that are at risk of flooding:

- Some members of the community may be at greater risk from a flood than others due to their age, disability, illness (both short term and long term) etc.
- Vulnerable people should be identified prior to a flood so that providing assistance to them is included in the flood plan.
- Don't forget that someone in the community could become vulnerable if they suffer a short term illness or are recovering from say, an operation. People in the community should be encouraged to contact the flood plan group if they feel they might need assistance, even if it is only during a short period of time.

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Identify community resources:

- Flood protection products cost money but many can be made if someone in the community is handy at DIY. The DIY option may not be as effective as the products on the market but if they are well made and fitted they can be very effective.
- If there are a number of people in the community buying flood protection products, then it would be a good idea for the community group to pull together a bulk order and try to negotiate a discounted price.
- In the event that there is an evacuation from households during a flood, identify in advance if there is somewhere to go for shelter such as a community centre, school, church, library, sports hall etc. and that facilities will be made available such as chairs, hot drinks, toilets, washing facilities etc. The building and main access routes would need to be outside the flood risk area and permission granted to use it. The co-ordinator or someone delegated by him/her would need to be a key holder of the facility and have volunteers to operate it.
- It may be possible to use this facility for parking your car but if not, then alternative arrangements should be in place for people to park their cars in safety from floods.
- A community grab box could be used to store essential equipment, such as torches, first aid blankets, first aid kits etc. in agreed premises, preferably outside the flood risk area such as community centre, local business or depot. Equipment such as dehumidifiers, heaters, shovels, generators and emergency lighting could be of value during and after a flood.

Decide on a Communication Plan:

- Make as detailed a list as possible of each other's contact numbers. Floods can occur when people are working or are away and may need to be contacted.
- Designate someone to keep the list updated and keep the list with the plan.
- Decide in advance how a flood alert is to be communicated. For example you may decide on using a communication tree – this is where a small number of people are the initial points of contact and they each telephone 2 or 3 others in the community and they in turn phone 2 or 3 others again and so on, until everyone in the community has been alerted to a flood.

Decide on an Action Plan:

- Now that you have identified the flood risks, the vulnerable people and the community resources decide what safe actions could be taken by volunteers and/or residents to protect against those risks.
- Keep the proposed actions realistic and safe – at all times people should put safety first. Volunteers and residents are not responsible for doing the jobs of the emergency services people.
- Encourage people to leave a spare key with a neighbour and that people know how to use flood protection equipment for their neighbours in their absence (e.g. if they are at work or away on holidays).

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- Talk to the vulnerable people in your community and agree with them in advance what sort of help they might need if there is a flood, for example they may need help fitting their flood protection products (e.g. door barriers, air-vent covers etc.); moving valuable possessions, furniture and paperwork upstairs; switching off water, electricity and gas supplies if needed and switching them back on when it is safe to do so; gathering together prescribed medication and repeat prescriptions if it is likely that they may need to be evacuated from their home. Include this type of information in your action plan and assign volunteer(s) to assist these vulnerable people. Make sure that the vulnerable people are informed of who will come to assist them so that they know to allow that person/people into their home.

Other things to consider and include in your plan:

- It may be worthwhile engaging with other community flood groups to share experiences on maintaining the flood plan.
- Test your flood plan – carry out a dry-run of your flood plan and get as many of your community as possible to participate. Make an appointment with the community emergency services for them to be involved.
- Share knowledge about household flood protection products, their prices and suppliers.
- Beware of bogus traders and looters during the time of a flood – alarms may not be working.
- Make a list of reputable contractors who may be required after a flood.