



Be prepared for flooding

Your quick guide to flood warnings and ways you can help protect your home



This is a quick and simple guide to help you understand flood warnings and what you can do to help be prepared in the event of a flood. It also gives you an idea of the different types of temporary flood protection measures available which can help reduce the potential damage to your property.

Flood warnings

What do they mean?

The Environment Agency is responsible for issuing flood warnings when there is a threat of flooding from main rivers or the sea. Depending on the severity of the potential flood, there are three different warnings that can be issued. These are:



FLOOD ALERT

Flood Alert

What it means: Flooding is possible and you should make sure you are prepared.

What to do: Prepare a 'flood kit'. Keep an eye on water levels outside and be prepared to act on your personal flood plan. Advice on preparing flood kits and flood plans can be found at the back of this document.



FLOOD WARNING

Flood Warning

What it means: Flooding is highly likely and you need to take immediate action.

What to do: Move valuables and pets to a safe place and put flood protection measures in place to protect yourself and your home. Turn off your gas, electricity and water supply if it is safe to do so. Help others do the same.



SEVERE FLOOD WARNING

Severe Flood Warning

What it means: Severe flooding is extremely likely and there is a potential danger to life.

What to do: Stay in a safe place with a means of escape. Dial **999** if you or anyone else is in immediate danger. Co-operate with the emergency services and be prepared to evacuate if required.

The Environment Agency (EA) uses the latest technology to monitor rainfall, groundwater and tide levels 24 hours a day. This information is then combined with weather data and tidal reports to provide a flood forecast for local areas, including information about the likelihood and severity of a flood.

Flood alerts relate to a wider geographical area, while flood warnings are specific to a particular area within this. In Southampton, the tidal reaches of the River Itchen and the River Test lie within the wider Southampton Water flood alert area, and within the Itchen Estuary flood warning area.

If a flood alert or warning is issued, you can find out more about the situation by calling the Environment Agency's Floodline on **0345 988 1188***. Then you can use quickdial codes to get to the information specific to the area you are interested in.

Quickdial codes

You can use a quickdial code to get the information you need about a specific area quickly. Call Floodline on **0345 988 1188**, press **1** and then enter the seven-digit quickdial code that relates to the area you are interested in.

Southampton Water: **0122121**

Itchen Estuary: **0122124**

Lower Test: **0122218**

Lower Itchen: **0122236**

Monks Brook: **0122238**

Tanners Brook: **0122224**

How to receive flood warnings

You can sign up to receive warnings directly from the Environment Agency. They can be a telephone call, email or text message to let you know when flooding is a possibility. This service is FREE and you can register online at www.environment-agency.gov.uk, then search 'Prepare for flooding'. Alternatively you can call Floodline on **0345 988 1188**.

Please note, if you use an inbound call barring service, this may prevent you from receiving automated flood messages by phone.

*Calls to 03 numbers should cost no more than a national rate call to an 01 or 02 number. They usually count towards any inclusive minutes and discount schemes in the same way as calls to 01 and 02 numbers.

Protecting your property from flooding

When flooding is forecast, you may need to put some simple measures in place quickly to help protect your home. Traditionally sandbags have been used to block doorways, drains and other openings to help prevent water from entering a property. While they are cheap and relatively easy to obtain, they are heavy, take time to prepare and stack, and water can sometimes seep in even when they are stacked properly. In comparison to other, purpose-made flood protection products, sandbags are relatively inefficient. Some temporary alternatives you could consider are:

Absorbent sacks

These are an alternative to sandbags, but of similar size and shape. These lightweight sacks are filled with super-absorbent crystals that swell up when in contact with water. They create a barrier and help prevent water entering a property through a doorway.

Advantages

- They are lightweight
- They are easy to handle
- They can be disposed of at landfill (unless contaminated)
- They can be stored in a home prior to a flood (some for up to five years) without affecting the quality

Disadvantages

- Prior warning is required in order for them to be installed
- Several sacks may be required to create an effective barrier
- Some are ineffective if exposed to salt water (check with supplier)

Cost and availability

Absorbent sacks are available from many DIY stores, builders' merchants and online flood product suppliers from around £7 each.



Airbrick covers

These are small plastic covers that clip onto your existing airbricks to create a barrier, to help prevent water entering your property through the airbricks.



Advantages

- They are lightweight
- They are easy to use
- They are cost effective
- They are reusable

Disadvantages

- They must be removed after a flood or once a warning has passed in order to prevent damp to the property
- They require storage
- All airbricks must be covered

Cost and availability

Airbrick covers can be purchased from many DIY stores, builders' merchants or specialist flood product suppliers from around £5 each.

Toilet/pipe bung

This is a strong rubber bag that is inflated in the U-bend to prevent sewage backflow. A similar product can be used in external drains to prevent backflow. A sealed toilet lid is also available, which is pushed into the toilet to create a seal.

Advantages

- It is quick and easy to deploy
- It reduces the risk of flooding via the drainage system
- It is reusable



Disadvantages

- It must be removed as soon as possible
- While installed, the toilet cannot be used
- It must be fitted correctly
- It can only withstand a certain amount of water pressure

Cost and availability

Toilet and pipe bungs can be purchased from DIY stores and flood product suppliers from between £30 and £50.



More permanent flood protection measures you can consider

If you live in a flood risk area, you may wish to consider more permanent and robust ways to help protect your property. For example, you could use property level protection (PLP) measures to provide a cost effective way of reducing the risk of flood damage to your home.

Property level protection can include **flood resistance measures**. These form a barrier against flood water and help to prevent it from entering your home. They include: flood barriers, automatic airbricks, non-return valves, pumps and waterproof brick sealant.

Since it is not always possible, or safe, to keep flood water out of a property, the other option is to implement **flood resilience measures** which help to reduce the damage caused by flood water if it enters your property. These measures also help speed up the recovery process after a flood. They include: replacing carpets with waterproof tiling, raising electricity sockets and using waterproof plaster on walls.

Advice on purchasing flood protection measures

When it comes to flood protection measures, there are many different brands and product types on offer which will be suitable for different properties. You will need to consider the cost and suitability of the products for your home before purchasing. For some general advice about the products available, visit the National Flood Forum's website at www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk, or speak to an advisor on **01299 403 055**.

On average the installation of flood protection measures costs between £4,000 and £10,000. However, each home's requirements are unique and the most suitable products for you may cost more or less than this.

Property Protection Advisor online tool

Property Protection Advisor is an online tool, put together by JBA Consulting on behalf of the National Flood Forum, which allows you to estimate how much it will cost you to protect your home from flooding using various property level protection (PLP) measures. After entering a few basic details about your property, the Advisor will produce a tailored online report with some estimated costs. It will also make recommendations about protection measures and work to your property that you may wish to consider, and will direct you to further advice. This useful tool is available on the National Flood Forum's website. Visit www.nationalfloodforum.org and click on the 'Protect my property' button on the left-hand menu bar.

Professional advice

If you are going to reduce the risk of flooding to your property by making permanent changes to your home, such as installing flood barriers or raising electrical sockets, we strongly recommend you seek professional advice before you do this. A list of suitable professionals offering flood protection advice can be found in the Blue Pages directory.

The Blue Pages directory

The Blue Pages is a useful directory produced by the National Flood Forum, which lists a range of robust property level flood protection products and suppliers which you may want to consider. The directory is available to view online at www.bluepages.org.uk.



Planning ahead is key

The sort of flooding that potentially could be experienced in Southampton is likely to be short-lived (as it tends to be linked to the tide), however, it could still cause damage to your property and possessions. Preparing for a flood in advance can help reduce the damage caused in the event of a flood. Simple things like storing cherished and irreplaceable items such as photographs up high, where flood waters cannot reach, can help protect them.

Preparing a flood kit

A flood kit is a bag or box of essential items you have ready in the event of a flood. Items you may wish to consider keeping in your flood kit include:

- A torch
- A wind-up or battery radio
- Spare batteries
- Warm clothing
- Wellies and other waterproof clothing including gloves
- A first aid kit and prescription medication
- Bottled water and non-perishable food
- Baby care items
- Copies of home insurance documents
- A list of useful and emergency contact details e.g. of friends, relatives or your landlord.

Creating a personal flood plan

Planning in advance how you and your family would respond in the event of a flood can help avoid a panic and help you cope if a flood does occur. To help you plan, you should think about:

- Who to contact and where to go if your home is flooded.
- Which of your belongings are the most important and should be moved first – would it be the TV or the family photo album?
- How you turn off the gas, electricity and water supply.
- Does your insurance policy cover flood damage? Would items be replaced like for like, and is the estimated value of your contents accurate?
- Where you can get sandbags or other flood protection products quickly.

For more information and advice on creating a personal flood kit and flood plan, visit the Environment Agency's website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk and search for 'Make a flood plan'.

Contacts

If you have any questions about this document or flood-related projects in Southampton please contact us.

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 flooding@southampton.gov.uk

 [Southampton.gov.uk/flooding](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/flooding)



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