

# Flood Advice

This document covers:

- Are you are at risk of flooding?
- Help to prevent flooding – report an incident
- Public health advice after flooding
- Sandbags
- Insurance
- Flood protection products and services
- Useful websites

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## ***Are you are at risk of flooding?***

### **Floodline**

You can find out if your property is on a floodplain by visiting the [Environment Agency](#) website and entering your postcode into the flood map. If you are at risk, you can register to be issued with automatic flood warning updates by phoning the Environment Agency's Floodline on 0845 988 1188.

### **Flood Warning Codes**

The updated warning service has three types of warnings that will help you prepare for flooding and take action.

They are:

- Flood Alert
- Flood Warning
- Severe Flood Warning

### **Flood Alert**



#### **What it means**

Flooding is possible. Be prepared.

#### **When it's used**

Two hours to two days in advance of flooding.

#### **What to do**

- Be prepared to act on your flood plan.
- Prepare a flood kit of essential items.
- Monitor local water levels and the flood forecast on our website.

### **Flood Warning**



#### **What it means**

Flooding is expected. Immediate action required.

**When it's used**

Half an hour to one day in advance of flooding.

**What to do**

- Move family, pets and valuables to a safe place.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
- Put flood protection equipment in place.

**Severe Flood Warning**



**What it means**

Severe flooding. Danger to life.

**When it's used**

When flooding poses a significant threat to life.

**What to do**

- Stay in a safe place with a means of escape.
- Be ready should you need to evacuate from your home.
- Co-operate with the emergency services.
- Call 999 if you are in immediate danger.

**Warnings no longer in force**

**What it means**

No further flooding is currently expected in your area.

**When it's used**

When river or sea conditions begin to return to normal.

**What to do**

- Be careful. Flood water may still be around for several days.
- If you've been flooded, ring your insurance company as soon as possible.

## ***Help to prevent flooding – report an incident***

There are a number of ways you can do your bit to help prevent flooding in the borough.

### **Reporting an Incident**

Call the **London Borough of Sutton** on 0208 770 5070 if you see:

- Minor obstructions to waterways which cause risk of flooding

Call the **Environment Agency** Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60 if you see:

- Watercourse blocked by vehicle or fallen tree causing risk of flooding
- Unusual drop in river flow
- Collapsed or badly damaged river banks

Call **Thames Water** Customer Centre on 0845 9200 800 if you see:

- Flooding from a public sewer
- Bubbles in the bottom of your toilet or water draining away very slowly
- Leak on your supply pipe

### **Stop and think, not down the sink!**

Help prevent blockages in drains and sewers by:

- Scraping or wiping plates, pans and utensils prior to washing to remove food and
- Grease and put scrapings and waste food into a bin for collection.
- Keeping oil and grease out of washing-up water
- Using strainers in sink plug holes and put any collected food debris in the bin.
- Not sweeping solids into floor drains – put rubbish and food waste in bins.
- Keeping floors free from spills, waste, fat and grease
- DO NOT put cooking oil, fat or grease down the sink or any drain!

## ***Public health advice after flooding***

### **Cleaning up the house after the flood**

The floodwater affecting your home or other property may have been contaminated with sewage and other contaminants. Although this would be very diluted and present a low risk there are a few precautions when dealing with the problem as below:

- Cover open cuts and wounds on exposed skin with a waterproof plaster.
- Remove all soft furnishings and fittings that are damaged beyond repair.
- Remove all dirty water and silt from the property as much as possible, including out of the space under downstairs floorboards if you have these. This may require pumping out.
- Wash down all hard surfaces with hot soapy water several times until visually clean.
- Use a domestic disinfectant, following manufacturers directions as to concentrations, to wash over all hard surfaces after cleaning.
- Food preparation surfaces and storage cupboards, refrigerators etc should be washed down with food safe disinfectants such as Milton, Dettol or similar.
- Allow to thoroughly dry - this will also help to destroy any germs left behind.
- Heating and good ventilation will assist the drying process.
- Clothing and bedding and other soft/fabric articles including childrens' toys etc should be laundered on a hot wash (60°C and above), which will destroy any germs that may be present. Other soft furnishings that have been contaminated and cannot be put in a washing machine will have to be professionally cleaned or if this is not possible may have to be disposed of.

### **Other contaminants**

If the floodwater contained oil, diesel etc this should in the main be removed with the floodwater and silt. Any remaining oil, diesel etc contamination in accessible areas can be removed by using a detergent solution and washing the surface down after initial cleaning has been carried out. In inaccessible areas such as under floorboards it may present an odour problem but is not necessarily a health hazard. Further advice should be sought from

Environmental Health if the odour persists or if you are particularly concerned about it for other reasons.

### **Returning to your home**

It is recommended that you only fully re-occupy your home once the above cleaning has been carried out. There may be additional works to be carried out eventually as advised by your insurance company, housing officer, landlord, builder etc. If you decide to return to your home before this further work is completed you should:

- Try to have some heating on at all times, consider the use of a dehumidifier.
- Ensure the property is well ventilated. Leave windows open as much as possible.
- Remember security though!
- Ensure that if you have airbricks to any under floor spaces that these are unblocked to give cross ventilation to these areas.
- While in the property floorboards, walls etc will continue to dry out. Any loose material and dust resulting from this should be vacuumed up on a regular basis.

- Very young children should avoid playing directly on timber floorboards or any damaged tiled floors if possible, - be aware of the risk of injury from sharp edges on tiles or raised nails in the floorboards until these have been repaired.
- Food Preparation and Storage
- Ensure water taps are cleaned and disinfected before using them for the first time
- Ensure all surfaces that food will come into contact with are sound and disinfected as above. If worktops and other areas show signs of damage, avoid food contact with these areas. Particularly make sure that shelves including in your refrigerator where food is stored are cleaned and disinfected.
- Try to keep any open food in an enclosed airtight container.
- All crockery, pots and pans should be thoroughly washed with very hot soapy water before using. If any of these are badly chipped or damaged do not use. You could also use a food safe disinfectant to sanitise them after cleaning.
- Take particular care in preparing food; always wash your hands before starting
- If you follow the basic advice above you should not experience any additional health problems.
- Additional repair works
- Eventually other necessary works may have been identified by your insurers, builders etc.
- These will possibly be carried out after the property has substantially dried out. However if plaster walls and partitions have been affected badly and do not dry out in a sound condition the plaster and boards affected will have to be removed, walls dried out and re-plastered.
- Otherwise redecoration of sound walls is all that will be necessary.
- Any areas showing signs of mould should be treated - fungicidal products are available from DIY Stores.
- After about six months it would be advisable to check timber floors for any evidence of rot or shrinkage. Any necessary repair work can then be made.
- Fitted units, particularly in the kitchen, made of chipboard may not dry out well and may become damaged by absorbed water. Sanitisation of these is difficult and therefore may have to be replaced.
- Check for structural damage to your property and if you think there is damage or danger seek advice from your insurers, builder or building control officer.

## **Sandbags**

### **Obtaining sandbags**

If flooding is imminent you can help protect your property by covering doors, windows and airbricks with plywood, sandbags or metal sheeting.

Sandbags are one of the most well known ways of keeping floodwater out of properties but when used alone, are not always effective. To increase protection put a large sheet of heavy duty plastic between the sandbags and the wall of your house.

### **Sutton Council does not issue sandbags to residents or businesses**

Unfilled sandbags and a supply of sand can be purchased from most builders merchants and DIY stores, which can be found through an online directory such as [Yell](#).

If you have not purchased sandbags and sand in advance, you can use alternatives such as pillow cases or refuse sacks and fill them with garden soil.

### **How to fill and position sandbags**

- Unless you have access to a sandbag filling machine, this is a two person job: one to hold the bag and one to fill.
- Sand is abrasive - both people should wear protective gloves.
- Do not fill bags more than half full. Remember that they can get heavy quickly, so do not over fill, or fill them too far away from where you need to position them.
- It is not necessary to tie the end of the bags.
- Remove any debris from the area where the bags are to be placed.
- Place the half filled bags lengthways and parallel to the direction of the water flow.
- Tuck the opened end under the filled half of the bag and position it pointing into the water flow.
- Place bags in layers. Like a brick wall, make sure that in the next layer each bag overlaps the one below by half.
- Stamp bags firmly into place to eliminate gaps and create a tight seal
- If you need to create a sandbag protection that is more than three layers high you will need to build in a pyramid style. For the structure to be stable, you should build the 'sandbag wall' three times as wide as you need it to be high. It will also be more effective if you alternate the layers lengthways and crosswise. Stamp each bag in place and tuck the loose end firmly under the filled portion of the bag.

## ***Insurance***

It is most important to seek the best possible insurance cover for your home and contents – it is too late to consider this after a flood. Further information may be obtained from [Association of British Insurers](#) or telephone them on 020 7600 3333.

Contact your insurance company immediately if your home has flooded, the majority of household policies provide insurance cover for flooding. If you are a tenant and have taken out contents insurance, household contents, fixtures and fittings should be covered; it is normally the responsibility of your landlord to provide building insurance. However you are advised to check your policy. Remember to keep records of flood damage (for example photos) and not to dispose of anything without first consulting your insurance company.

If you are uninsured you will most likely be responsible for covering all costs of flood damage.

## ***Flood protection products and services***

The National Flood Forum provides support and advice to communities and individuals that have been flooded or are at risk of flooding. It is a collective, authoritative voice that aims to influence central and local government and all agencies that manage flood risk. As the Flood Protection Industry grows, with new products appearing on a regular basis, The National Flood Forum has sought to maintain close relationships with the manufacturers and agents of those products through working closely with the umbrella body the Flood Protection Association.

The NFF does not endorse any individual product or company and takes no responsibility for any issues or disputes arising as a result of their purchase or use. For a list of products and services click [here](#).

### **Sutton Safer Trader Scheme**

The Safer Sutton Trader Scheme has been introduced so that local residents can use traders who come to work at their home, confident that certain standards will be met. It may be useful to consider when appointing traders to carry out repairs on your home after flooding. More information can be found [here](#).

## ***Useful websites***

### **DirectGov**

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/WhereYouLive/FloodingInYourArea/index.htm>

Information and advice on who to contact in the event of a flood, protecting your home and belongings from flood damage, coastal flooding and what to do if a flood happens.

### **The Environment Agency**

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

The Environment Agency issue flood warnings and provide advice on preparing and responding to flooding. Use the Environment Agency Website to find out if you live in an area at risk of flooding.

### **Health Protection Agency**

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/flooding>

Health advice following floods.

### **National Flood Forum**

[www.floodforum.org.uk](http://www.floodforum.org.uk)

A not for profit organisation that provides information and advice to people at risk of, or who have been flooded. They have produced The Blue Pages a directory of providers of services goods relating to flooding and advice on making homes flood resilient (joint NFF/ABI information).

### **The Met Office**

[www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

One of the leading providers of environmental and weather related services which provides weather warnings for the next 5 days.

### **The Association of British Insurers**

[www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk)

The Association of British Insurers can provide advice on insurance issues relating to flooding.