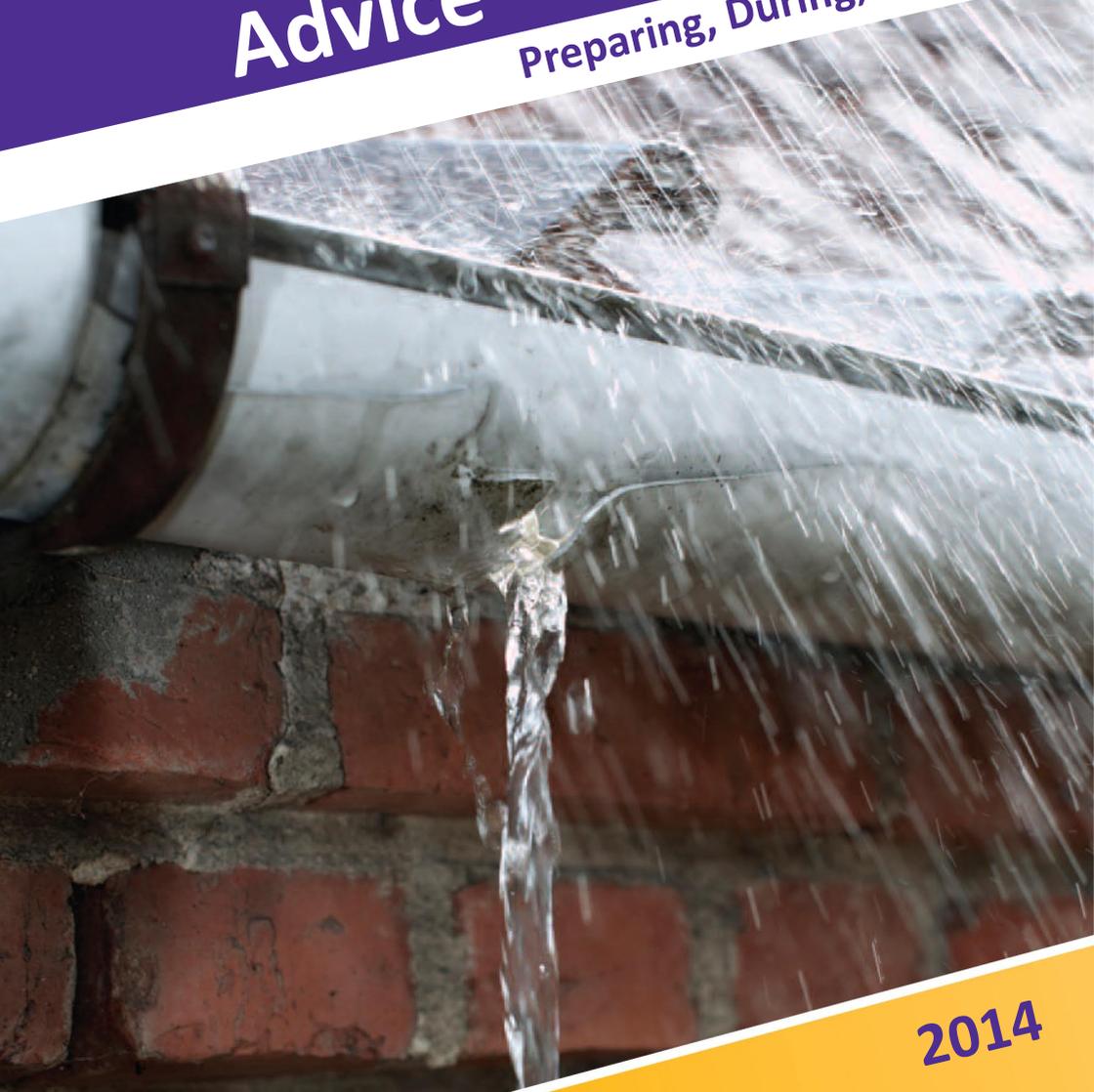




The Consumer Council

Flooding Advice

Preparing, During, and After



2014

CONTENTS

Preparing for a flood	2
During a flood	5
After a flood	8
Useful contacts	12

PREPARING FOR A FLOOD

It's a good idea to prepare your home against flood damage. A flood in your home can be extremely distressing and upsetting. It is important to be prepared as flooding can happen very quickly even in areas which have never flooded before.

1. Check if your home is at risk of flooding

The Rivers Agency flood map allows you to check if your property is at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/rivers-agency

2. Check your insurance cover

Make sure your home and contents insurance covers against flood damage and find out if damaged belongings will be replaced.

If you don't have insurance, shop around now to find a policy that's affordable and meets your needs. If you find it difficult to get insurance cover talk to insurance brokers who specialise in difficult to insure properties.

3. Check local flood warnings

Get the latest flood warnings from local news, weather and traffic bulletins: www.trafficwatchni.com. The Met Office website also provides information about weather warnings: www.metoffice.gov.uk

4. Know how to turn off your electricity and gas supply

If you don't know how to do this contact your supplier. Never touch electrical switches or appliances such as sockets or meters if flood water has come into your home.

PREPARING FOR A FLOOD

5. Maintain drains

Property owners are responsible for the drains on their property. Therefore, you should ensure that these are maintained regularly and free from blockages.

6. Make a plan

Make a list now of what you will move if a flood occurs. This could include things like important documents, treasured items, electrical equipment, furniture, vehicles and garden furniture.

7. Get together a flooding kit

Gather together essential items and keep them in a waterproof box where they are easy to reach. Things to include:

- Copies of home insurance documents;
- Passport/drivers license and benefits information;
- Bank cards and cash;
- Torch, radio, batteries, candles and matches;
- First aid kit, prescription medication and baby/pet food if required;
- Warm, waterproof clothing, blankets and rubber gloves;
- Mobile phone and charger;
- Spare set of car and household keys; and
- Bottled water and dried food.

PREPARING FOR A FLOOD

8. Useful table of contacts

Complete the following table of useful contacts and keep it with your flooding kit:

Contact	Telephone Number
Flooding Incident Line	0300 2000 100
Insurance company and policy number	
Family and neighbours	
Bank phone number and details	
Work phone number	
GP	
Local Council	
Electricity supplier and meter number	
Northern Ireland Electricity	03457 643 643
Gas supplier and meter number	
Northern Ireland Gas Emergency Service	0800 002 001
Northern Ireland Water	03457 440 088
Electrician	
Plumber	
Builder	
Other	

DURING A FLOOD

1. Stay safe

Avoid walking in flood water and try not to come into contact with it. It is difficult to know how strong or deep the water is. It can contain sewage, chemicals and sharp objects.

Plan now where you will meet members of your household if there's a flood and how you will get in contact with each other if you are separated. Remember to bring your list of useful contacts with you.

2. Plan a safe exit

Plan a safe exit from your home. If you know you will need assistance to leave your home agree who you will contact to help you, for example, a carer, family member or friend.

3. Protect your home

If your home is at risk of flooding, keep some sandbags, floodboards and plastic covers available so you can block doorways and airbricks.

Sandbags: These may be available from government agencies during a flood but their supply is limited. You can buy sandbags from DIY stores or buy sand and fill the bags yourself. You could also fill pillow cases with earth.

Floodboards: These can stop flood water from entering your home.

DURING A FLOOD

Once the flood water has gone down remember to remove sandbags/ floodboards so your home will dry properly. Be careful when moving these as they may have been in contact with sewage.

4. Reporting a flood

Contact the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100. The Flooding Incident Line will take all your details and contact the appropriate organisation on your behalf.

However if there is a life at risk you should contact the emergency services on 999.

5. Consumers with specific needs

NI Water aims to help its Critical Care customers as quickly as possible during a flood. NIE's Critical Care customers who are dependent on life support electrical equipment will also be treated as priority during a flood.

NI Water and NIE's Customer Care Registers are for consumers who have a disability, are elderly, have a serious medical condition or need extra help for any other reason.

To join the Customer Care Register for free contact NI Water or NIE using the details on page 12

DURING A FLOOD

6. Leaving your home

If you do have to be evacuated from your property because of flooding make sure your premises are secure. Don't leave windows open in the hope it will help dry out the property. Notify the Police that your property has been vacated and let your family know where you can be contacted.

AFTER A FLOOD

Returning home

If you have had to leave your home, wait for flood waters to subside and make sure it is safe to return to your property before trying to go home. Take care as there could be structural damage to your property or other dangers such as broken glass or raised manhole covers.

1. Contact your insurance provider

Contact your insurance company straight away before you start cleaning up. It will advise you what you need to do. Ask when it will send out a loss adjustor and if you are to clean your home or not.

Keep your own record of any flood damage:

- Take photographs and video recordings;
- Mark the level of flood water in every room with a permanent pen;
- Make a list of damaged items;
- Make a note of any telephone calls with your insurance company: record the date, what was agreed and the name of the person you spoke to;
- Keep copies of any letters, emails or faxes you send or receive; and
- Keep your receipts of any expenses incurred.

If you live in rented accommodation, contact your landlord who is responsible for the insurance of the building. If there is any damage to your personal belongings, contact your own contents insurance provider.

AFTER A FLOOD

2. What to do with utilities

Electricity

- Do not touch electrical switches or appliances such as sockets and meters;
- If your electricity supply is not switched off at the mains get a qualified electrician to do this;
- Get the wiring and appliances checked by a qualified electrician before using them; and
- If your electricity supply is cut off due to flood contact Northern Ireland Electricity.

Gas

- If you can smell gas, call the NI Gas Emergency Service immediately;
- Do not turn on your gas or gas appliances;
- Do not turn on appliances;
- Air vents could be blocked and appliances could be dangerous; and
- Get your gas supply and appliances checked by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

3. Cleaning up after a flood

Flood water can contain sewage, chemicals and waste including sharp objects. Always wear waterproof clothing, rubber gloves and a face mask. Further advice can be obtained from your local council's Environmental Health Department.

AFTER A FLOOD

Removing flood water

You can use a pump or bucket to remove flood water. Pumps and generators can be hired or bought from DIY shops.

Only pump water out of your property when the level outside is lower than inside. This will reduce the risk of structural damage.

Cleaning and disinfecting

This can be done using normal household products. If you are hosing down surfaces do not use a high-pressure hose as this could spray sewage into the air. Place items such as food, clothes, toys, medicines and cosmetics which may have been in contact with contaminated water into heavy duty, sealable bags.

**DO NOT THROW AWAY ITEMS UNTIL YOUR
INSURANCE COMPANY HAS AGREED YOU CAN**

Drying out your home

Leave windows and doors open as much as possible. If using dehumidifiers, close external windows and doors.

AFTER A FLOOD

4. How to protect your home from further flood damage

- Lay tiles and use rugs instead of carpets;
- Fit stainless steel, plastic or solid wood kitchens that are water resistant and easy to clean;
- Install free standing kitchen units that can be moved;
- Use lime plaster or horizontal plaster boards instead of gypsum plaster on walls;
- Fit water resistant skirting boards or varnish existing skirting boards;
- Raise the level of plug sockets and install electrical equipment (e.g. televisions) at least 1.5 meters above ground level;
- Move main parts of heating and ventilation systems upstairs or raise them above ground level;
- Install one way valves (non-return valves) to drainage pipes where flood water may enter your property. These only allow the water to flow one way; and
- Replace wooden window frames and doors with ones that are made from man-made material like uPVC.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Flooding Incident Line - 0300 2000 100

NI Direct - www.nidirect.gov.uk/flooding-in-your-area

Northern Ireland Water

Tel: 03457 440 088

Web: www.niwater.com

Transport NI (Roads Service)

Tel: 028 9054 0540

Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk/transport-ni

Rivers Agency

Tel: 028 9025 3355

Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk/rivers-agency

NIE

Tel: 03457 643 643

Web: www.nie.co.uk

NI Gas Emergency Service

Tel: 0800 002 001

Freephone:0800 121 6022
Tel: 028 9025 1600
Web: www.consumercouncil.org.uk
Email: info@consumercouncil.org.uk