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Resources**
Wales

Flood Risk Awareness Guidance

for Flood Plan Leads, Wardens
and Community Volunteers



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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook

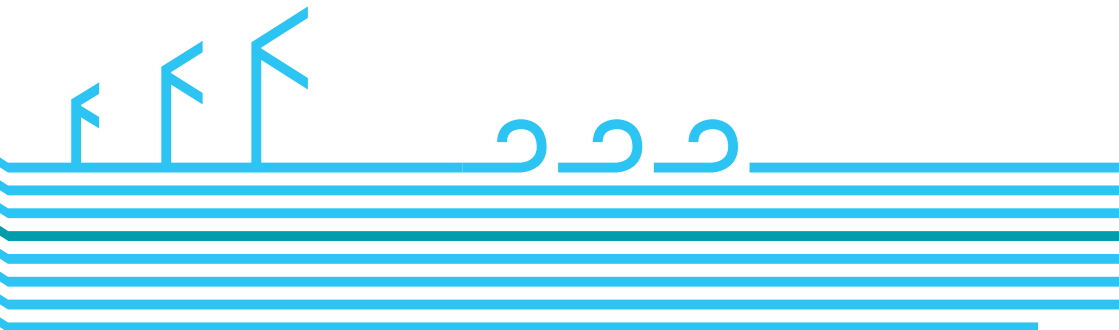
The overall aim of this handbook is to provide you with information that will help you carry out your role as a community volunteer in a safe and responsible way.

This handbook sets out to raise your awareness and understanding of potential risks both to yourself and others before, during and after a flood and to provide guidance on how to minimise exposure to those risks.

It is hoped that you will be better prepared to provide worthwhile support and guidance to your community, without compromising your wellbeing or that of those you intend to assist.

Key Point

b Your first priority is your own safety



Community resilience

Community resilience is about communities using local resources and knowledge to help themselves during an emergency in a way that complements the local emergency services.

Your community will be better prepared to cope during and after an emergency when everyone works together using their local knowledge. Things like understanding what requirements most-at-need groups may have in an emergency can make a real difference.

Being prepared and able to respond to an emergency can often help people recover more quickly. This illustrates how successful community resilience can be and why many communities are already engaged in this planning.

Flood plans

A flood plan is an account of information and procedures to help prepare for flooding. The overall aim of a flood plan is, where possible, to help reduce the risk of harm to persons and damage to property.

A flood plan will not remove the risk of flooding but being prepared may help reduce the impacts and assist with the recovery process.

Working together as a community through a flood plan can have many benefits. It can:

- Provide coordination, support and guidance to the community before a flood
- Help share local knowledge during a flood to assist the Emergency Services
- Help relay local knowledge, concerns and issues to relevant authorities before and following a flood

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is intended for any community group that is planning ahead of a flood. While the focus is on community volunteers, this is equally relevant to individuals and households at risk of flooding.

This guidance is intended to stand alongside your flood plan. Your flood plan outlines what you will do during a flood. An awareness of the risks you may face during a flood and the basic principles of safety apply to everyone.

Risk and safety

Assessing risk

It is important to remember that it is not possible to foresee all eventualities and everyone has different levels of capability.

- Remember that you are not part of the paid Emergency Services and you should not place yourself in danger in any way
- Do not put the safety and wellbeing of others at risk through your own actions

The Emergency Services

During a flood you should always follow the advice and guidance of the Emergency Services.

Key Point

Always follow the advice of the Emergency Services



The dangers of flood water

Emergency Exit routes

Always consider an exit route and a safe location to retreat to

- Flooding may occur long after rainfall has ceased and conditions may change unexpectedly. There may be a lag between rainfall and peak flood levels.
- Look and listen and continually assess the situation as it develops
- Avoid being trapped or cut off if flood waters rise unexpectedly

Rivers can be dangerous

Even when there is not a flood, rivers; streams; lakes and reservoirs can be dangerous under normal conditions.

Contaminated Water

Urban flood water typically carries 20 to 30 different diseases, especially if drains have backwashed and if sewerage is present.

In rural areas contamination is more likely to come from agricultural chemicals and animal waste.

- It is important to cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters. Protecting your hands can prevent infection
- Wash your hands with clean fresh water after coming into contact with flood water and always before eating, drinking or smoking
- Carry an antibacterial hand wash and treat your hands regularly if you come into contact with flood water
- Seek medical advice immediately if you or anyone else is affected by diarrhoea, fever or abdominal pain

Key Point

Do not walk through flood water

Avoid being cut off by flood water

Danger of unblocking drains

- Do not attempt to unblock drains or remove drain covers at any time
- Refer any blocked drains to the appropriate local authority

Equipment

Your local authority may have some sandbags ready to deploy at times of flooding, but their priority is to protect the public at large.

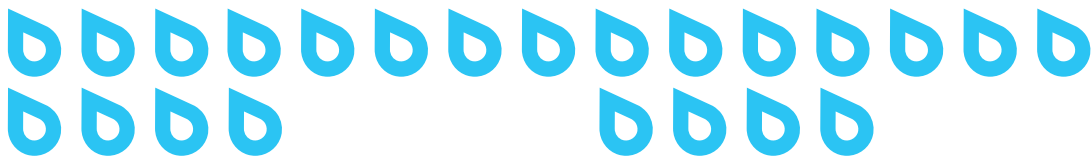
You should check with your local authority in advance to find out what their policy is, and if there is a charge for this service. If your local authority does not supply sandbags, you can buy your own supply from a DIY store or builder's merchants. More advice on sandbags can be found on **Gov.uk**.

Many households and businesses within the community may have their own property protection products such flood gates, air brick guards or sandbags. These products may not be effective at protecting a property from flooding if they are not installed and activated correctly according to the guidelines set out by the manufacturer.

- Check with neighbours if they want you to install their flood protection if they are away. Remember, it is important to install these products properly, so make sure you are trained by the property owner on how to use them safely.

It is the property owner's responsibility to instigate any actions, such as obtaining sandbags to defend against flooding to their property.

More information can be found on what is available at **www.bluepages.org.uk**.



Electricity and Gas

Never touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet or if the equipment has been underwater.

Do not turn the power on until it has been inspected by a qualified electrician.

Do not assume any part of a flooded electrical installation or appliance is safe. If you suspect a gas leak leave the area immediately and report the leak when safe to do so. Using a phone in the area may produce a spark.

Key point

Do not turn the power back on until it has been inspected by a qualified electrician

Mould

After a flood mould can grow in damp properties. Mould can be a hazard for babies, people with allergies, older people and asthmatics.

- Wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly if you come into contact with mould

Traffic

During a flood people may be distressed and/or distracted and may not be concentrating on their driving or the road ahead.

Additionally, poor driving conditions and decreased visibility may exacerbate this problem.

- Avoid walking or standing on (or close to) a road with passing traffic. Even on a pavement you may be vulnerable to being struck by a vehicle. Always keep a safe distance from moving traffic

Warning signs and road closures

Vehicles passing through flood waters push waves of water towards nearby properties, and possibly exacerbate the problem of flooding.

You could become stranded if your engine cuts out – just an egg cup full of water is enough to wreck a car engine.

The closing of roads falls under the responsibility of the Police.

- Do not place yourself at risk by trying to stop traffic
- Do not attempt to drive through flooded roads

Personal Safety

Safe working practices

Whatever roles or duties you are performing you are advised to never work in isolation.

- Community volunteers should always work in pairs or small groups and maintain visual contact at all times

Key points

- Never work alone
- Always work in pairs or small groups
- Always remain in clear view of others
- Wear high visibility clothing
- Tell someone where you are and what you're doing

Safety equipment

- Your health and safety should be your main priority at all times. It is recommended that you wear a high visibility jacket at all times, day or night, when undertaking any outdoor activities
- Ensure you are visible to others at all times. Use a torch when it is dark or in low light conditions
- Do not rely on your mobile phone as your primary source of communication as signal strengths may be weak in strong winds and heavy rain

Slips, trips and falls

- Always wear sturdy, appropriate footwear
- Avoid standing on or near anything that may be vulnerable to damage and collapse due to flooding, for example: bridges and riverbanks when water is high

Hypothermia

- Dress appropriately to stay warm and dry
- Drink plenty of fluids and hot drinks if it is cold

Falling hazards

- Flooding may be associated with high wind speeds and stormy conditions
- Be aware of falling hazards for example; roof tiles, trees and branches
- If you believe that weather conditions pose a threat to your safety then stop immediately and leave the area

Communicating

- Approach people in a civil, polite manner, clearly explaining your role and how you can help
- Not everyone will be prepared to hear about flooding: if they become aggressive in any way, leave them alone
- If they require emergency assistance, contact the emergency services

Animals and livestock

- Do not approach animals unless you consider it is safe to do so. If you are unsure, contact a member of the Emergency Services or the Dog Warden
- If you have pets, consider how to evacuate them along with yourself, and make sure you take their food and supplies for them with you when you leave your property and encourage others to do the same

Other important considerations

Collecting and sharing sensitive information



One of the key strengths of a community volunteer is local knowledge. Through your activities you are encouraged to get to know your community.

You may be able to identify households and individuals requiring priority assistance during a flood, such as older people, those less able and families with young children.

Some information on these individuals may be stored formally or informally. It is essential that you manage this sensitive information responsibly.

- Information relating to individuals or specific households, or businesses must not, under any circumstances, be passed on to any other persons
- Such information is only to be shared with the Emergency Services if a flood occurs

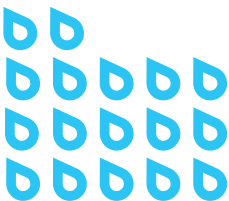
Evacuation

Listen to your local Emergency Services and follow their advice if you are asked to leave your home.

Criminal Activity

Be alert to the possibility of criminal activity during or after a flood

- If you see suspicious behaviour, inform the police as soon as it is safe to do so



Tourists and visitors

Tourists and holiday makers may be staying in your local area. Their knowledge of the area may be limited and some may not speak or understand English.

You can help by informing the emergency services if you know where these people are located.

Test exercises

The incidence of major flood events can be rare. With this in mind, it is important to conduct local test exercises using different scenarios and repeat any training on a regular basis to ensure knowledge and skills are maintained.



Door-to-door information distribution

One of your roles as a community volunteer may be to relay information to your community before a flood.

To ensure more households receive the information, a common approach is to hand out leaflets or newsletters door-to-door to each household directly. This can involve some issues of risk and courtesy to others:

- Wear a high visibility vest or jacket above your other clothing
- Never carry out your activities alone. Always work in pairs or small groups
- Let someone else know what you will be doing, and where, before you start your activities
- Do not put your hand through a letter box in case a dog, or other animal attempts to bite you
- Always close any gates after you leave the premises or at least leave them as you found them
- Always approach people in a polite manner, and clearly explain your role and how you can help
- Not everyone will be prepared to hear about flood risk, if they become aggressive in any way, leave them alone
- If they require emergency assistance, contact the emergency services
- Take extra care while walking on wet slippery surfaces such as tiled pathways
- Only carry out this type of activity in daylight conditions with good visibility

Summary

- **Your first priority is your own safety**
- **Do not enter flood water**
- **Avoid being cut off by rising flood water**
- **Wash your hands after contact with flood water, especially before eating or drinking**
- **Never work alone. Always work in pairs or small groups**
- **Wear high visibility clothing which is warm and appropriate for the conditions**
- **Inform someone, such as your group co-ordinator of your activities and where you are**
- **Avoid standing on or near anything that may be vulnerable to damage and collapse due to flood waters, for example; bridges and river banks when water levels are high**
- **Do not attempt to unblock drains or culverts**
- **Listen to and follow the advice given by the Emergency Services**
- **If you believe weather conditions pose a threat to your safety and wellbeing do not proceed with your activities as a community volunteer and exit the area**

This guidance has been produced with kind permission from Environment Agency and Cornwall Community Flood Forum

Questions to ask yourself

Please consider the following questions before beginning any flood activities. This checklist is for you to ensure that you stay safe. Some examples have been included as a guide.

Your first priority is your own safety.

1. What am I doing?

Eg: Knock doors to share flood info

2. What could harm me?

Eg: Slip/Trip/Fall/Aggressive pets

3. What could harm someone else?

Eg: n/a

4. What can I change to make it safe?

Eg: Make sure someone knows where I am, take mobile phone, work in pairs

5. Should I stop what I am doing?

Eg: Yes, if point 4 cannot be addressed or if weather conditions change eg: poor visibility



RISK CHECKLIST: Please consider the questions below before beginning any flood activities. This checklist has been supplied to help **YOU** stay safe. Your **FIRST** priority is your own safety.

Date:	1. What am I doing?
Name:	2. What could harm me?
	3. What could harm someone else?
	4. What can I change to make it safe?
	5. Should I stop what I'm doing?

Date:	1. What am I doing?
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