

## What should you do during a flood?

The City has flood warning information available that can be accessed by calling at (360) 330-7662, or through the Web site at: [www.cityofcentralia.com](http://www.cityofcentralia.com). The Web site includes information about sandbag locations and ways to contact and listen to the National Weather Service and check the status of the river heights. Additionally, the City's website provides up to date information on road conditions, road closures, road hazards and evacuation routes from different areas of the City.

### **Following is a list of important considerations that should be followed during times of flooding.**

1. *Prepare an evacuation plan:* Before the floodwaters hit, develop an evacuation plan among all members of a household that includes a meeting place outside of the house, as well as an escape route out of the floodplain and away from floodwaters. Have at least a 72-hour emergency kit with emergency contact information.
2. *Do not walk through flowing water:* Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths, mostly during flash floods. Currents can be deceptive; six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still there.
3. *Do not drive through a flooded area:* More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Don't drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out.
4. *Stay away from power lines and electrical wires:* The number two flood killer after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to City Electric or to Emergency Management.
5. *Shut off gas and electricity and move valuable contents upstairs:* Be prepared in advance with a detailed checklist because warning of an impending flood may provide little time for preparation prior to evacuation.
6. *Look out for animals, especially snakes:* Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to poke and turn things over and scare away small animals.
7. *Look before you step:* After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with mud and debris including broken bottles and nails and can be very slippery.
8. *Be alert for gas leaks:* Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns or open flames unless you know that the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.

This information is provided by the City of Centralia and is applicable to properties within the City. If you reside in a jurisdiction other than Centralia, contact your regulatory authority for information. If you believe you received this notice in error, or you no longer own this property, please contact the City of Centralia at (360) 330-7662 or via U.S. mail.

For more information about flood safety or the NFIP, please note the following:  
[www.floodalert-fema.gov](http://www.floodalert-fema.gov)  
[www.fema.gov/hazards/floods](http://www.fema.gov/hazards/floods)  
1-888-FLOOD29

City of Centralia  
Community Development Department  
118 West Maple  
Centralia, WA 98531



## *Flood Safety Information*



A Publication for City of  
Centralia Property Owners.

Tel: 360-330-7662  
Online: [www.cityofcentralia.com](http://www.cityofcentralia.com)

Mailing Address Line 1

Mailing Address Line 2

Mailing Address Line 3

## Are you prepared for a flood in your neighborhood?

### *You are receiving this brochure because your property is in or near a special flood hazard area.*

#### History of Flooding in Centralia.

City records dating back to the 1970s indicate that the Chehalis and Skookumchuck rivers have caused significant flooding within the City at least nine times in the last 37 years. The floods in 2009, 2007, 1996, 1990, 1986, and 1972 were record high levels for the Chehalis River at Centralia. Centralia has experienced at least 24 flood events from 1887 to 2009 a 122-year time frame. All of recent floods would have been estimated to exceed the so-called "100-year flood," or Base Flood.

The flooding in December 2007/2009 and in February 1996 was caused by prolonged precipitation accompanied by snowmelt, caused by a warm-weather trend known as a "Pineapple Express," caused many rivers and creeks throughout the Chehalis River watershed to rise to well over the 100-year flood levels, causing flooding in both rural and urban areas.

Flooding in Centralia usually occurs when weather patterns, geology, and hydrology combine to create conditions where river and stream waters flow outside of their usual course and "overspill" beyond their banks. In Centralia, the combination of these factors, augmented by ongoing development, create chronic seasonal flooding conditions.

Flooding is most common from October through April, when storms from the Pacific Ocean, 40 miles away, bring intense rainfall to the region. Centralia receives approximately 47 inches of rain on average each year. Larger floods result from heavy rains that continue over the course of several days, augmented by snowmelt at a time when the soil is near saturation from previous rains.

Riverine flooding and urban flooding are the two types of flooding that affects Centralia. Riverine flooding is the over-bank flooding of rivers and streams. Urban flooding results from the conversion of land from fields or woodlands to parking lots and roads, through which the land loses its ability to absorb rainfall.

## What should you do before a flood?

**Determine if your property is located in an area subject to flooding.**

Centralia features several large rivers and smaller tributaries, or streams, which are susceptible to annual flooding events that pose threats to life and safety and cause significant property damage. Large rivers include the Centralia and Skookumchuck, while streams include China Creek, Scammon

Creek, Salzer Creek, and Coffee Creek.

A property located within a special flood zone does not necessarily have flooding problems. Your property may be listed within a flood zone, as designated by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps. Upon request, the Community Development Department at (360) 330-7662, will make free flood zone determinations for properties within the City and its UGA area. If located in an "A" Zone, your property is within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), which is an area that has been determined to have the potential for flooding caused by a 100-year storm. The building department also maintains elevation certificates for many properties within the city which are also available for review and we also do site visits to answer additional questions.

#### Purchase flood insurance on your property.

Flooding is not covered by a standard homeowner's insurance policy. A separate flood insurance policy is required to cover damages incurred by flooding. Coverage is available for the building itself as well as for the contents of the building. The City of Centralia participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) that makes available federally backed flood insurance for all structures, whether or not they are located within the floodplain. Note that there is a 30-day waiting period before coverage goes into effect. Contact your insurance agency for more information. Flood insurance information is also available in Centralia Public Library.

#### Maintain drainage channels and pipes free of obstruction and debris.

The City of Centralia performs cleaning and maintenance activities on the drainage channels and pipes in City easements & rights-of-way in accordance with an established schedule and other standard operating procedures. Residents are encouraged to assist in maintaining the drainage in their areas by removing or reporting obstructions (such as shopping carts, leaves, debris, trash, etc.). Keeping drainage channels free of obstructions reduces flooding in the event of heavy rains. By way of City ordinance, it is illegal to dump trash, leaves, landscape debris, paint, grease, or any other material into any portion of the City's drainage system. Such dumping can have devastating impacts on water quality in addition to causing flooding. To report obstructions or illegal dumping, or for questions regarding drainage system maintenance, please contact Storm Water Maintenance at (360) 330-7542 or online at [www.cityofcentralia.com](http://www.cityofcentralia.com).

#### Protect your property from the hazards of flooding.

Various methods may be used to minimize flooding. If the floor level of your property is lower than the "Base Flood Elevation" (elevation of the 100-year flood, based on the FEMA maps), consider elevating your structure, if possible. Brochures discussing flood proofing and other mitigation measures are available at the City or on the City's website. If a flood is imminent, property can be protected by sandbagging areas subject to the entry of water into living spaces. Valuables and furniture may also be moved to higher areas of the dwelling to minimize damages.

#### Meet improvement requirements.

The NFIP requires that if the cost of reconstruction, additions, or other improvements to a building equals or exceeds 50%

then the building must meet the same construction requirements as a new building. Substantially damaged buildings must also be brought up to the same standards. For example, a residence damaged so that the cost of repairs equals or exceeds 50% of the building's value before it was damaged must be elevated above the base flood elevation. Please contact the Building Division at (360) 330-7662 for more information.

#### Meet permitting requirements.

All development within the city requires a permit. Always check and fulfill permitting requirements with the Community Development Department at (360) 330-7662 before you build on, alter, fill, or re-grade on any portion of your property and/or within any easement or right-of-way. Also, you can report any suspected permitting violations.

## What should you do after a flood?

- Listen to the radio, TV or other media outlet for emergency instructions.
- Avoid driving in flooded areas.
- Follow established procedure for property damage repairs:

Select a contractor who is licensed in his trade. The City requires that certain work be done only by licensed contractors. The Community Development Department has a register of licensed contractors, listed by their areas of expertise. Only licensed electricians may perform electrical work, only licensed plumbers may perform plumbing work, only licensed gas contractors may work on a gas system, only licensed mechanical contractors may perform heating, ventilation and air conditioning work, and only licensed building contractors may perform building related work. Verify that contractors are licensed before signing or agreeing to any repair contracts. It is also recommended that you verify certification of liability and workman's compensation insurance. Complaints against licensed contractors may be referred to the appropriate licensing agency. Require your contractors to obtain the proper permits for work being performed. Permits are required for any permanent improvement (including painting, roofing, siding, additions, alterations, etc.) to a structure and for site work such as grading, filling, etc. Permits are required even if a homeowner is doing the work himself.

For more information of the City's building permit requirements, contact the Community Development Department at (360) 330-7662.

#### Recognize the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains to help reduce flooding.

Floodplains are a natural component of the Centralia environment. Understanding and protecting the natural functions of floodplains helps reduce flood damage and protect resources. When flooding spreads out across the floodplain, its energy is dissipated, which results in lower flood flows downstream, reduced erosion of the streambank and channel, deposition of sediments higher in the watershed and improved groundwater recharge. Floodplains are scenic, valued wildlife habitat, and suitable for farming. Poorly planned development in floodplains can lead to streambank erosion, loss of valuable property, increased risk of flooding to downstream properties and degradation of water quality.