



Talking Points for Flooding

Talking points and message maps for local health professionals

These talking points may be inserted into message maps for outreach broadcasts pre-flood, during the flood, and post-flood.

Pre-Flood Event Messages

- Prepare a family plan and have emergency telephone numbers available.
- Assemble a disaster supply kit with enough food, water, and other supplies for at least 72 hours.
- Obtain a National Weather Service (NWS) Emergency Band Radio or portable radio. Have extra batteries.
- Follow the guidance provided in broadcasted flood warnings.

During the Flood Event Messages

- Follow broadcasted evacuation guidance.
- Stay out of flood waters if possible. Flood waters may contain bacterial contaminants, hazardous substances, and debris or sharp objects.
- Don't travel into or through flood waters, if possible. Obey warning and road closed signs.
- Don't attempt to save household possessions during the flood event. Wait until dangerous flood conditions have passed.

Post-Flood Event Messages

- Be sure the flood zone has been secured and that hazardous conditions (e.g., downed power lines) have been eliminated.
- Before entering into any buildings, be sure that the building has been inspected for structural integrity and that hazards (e.g., natural gas leaks) have been eliminated.
- Attempt to assess damage and losses and estimate value of damage to provide a community-wide damage assessment.
- Attempt to begin clean-up assessment and identify options quickly to minimize water damage and environmental contamination issues.

MESSAGE MAPS DURING A FLOOD EVENT

Message mapping is one of the most important risk communication tools that public health agencies can employ. The goal of a message map is to convey important information in a concise and easy to understand fashion.



General Guidelines for Completing a Message Map

- Stick to three key messages or one key message with three parts for each underlying concern or specific question.
- Keep key messages brief. The reader should ideally spend less than 10 seconds per line.
- Develop messages that are easily understood by the target audience. (For communications with the general public, use a 6th to 8th grade readability level.)
- Place messages within a message set. The most important messages should occupy the first and last positions.
- Develop key messages that cite credible third parties.
- Use graphics and other visual aids to enhance key messages.
- Keep a positive tone. Messages should be solution oriented and constructive. Try to balance negative messages with positive ones.
- Avoid unnecessary use of “absolute” words, such as no, not, never, nothing, and none.

The following is a message map that could be used when addressing the general public regarding flood response and safety.

Main message: “At this time, the City/County of _____ has experienced significant flooding. To help you and your loved ones stay safe during this event...”

Key Messages <i>Three key messages</i>	Supporting Information <i>Three pieces of supporting information for each key message</i>
Message 1 Follow broadcasted evacuation guidance.	Supporting Info 1 Listen to messages being broadcast by emergency management, your local news media, or your local governmental leaders regarding evacuation procedures. Supporting Info 2 Those living alone can be isolated and unaware of the dangers posed by flooding. Supporting Info 3 Check on your neighbors, friends, and relatives.
Message 2 Stay out of flood waters, if at all possible.	Supporting Info 1 Flood waters may contain many contaminants, including bacteria, viruses, hazardous wastes, debris, and sharp objects. Supporting Info 2 Half of all flood-related drowning occur when a vehicle is driven into flood waters. Turn around, don't drown. Supporting Info 3 The next highest percentage of drowning is due to walking into or nearby flood waters.
Message 3 Don't attempt to save or salvage personal belongings during a flood.	Supporting Info 1 Wait until the flooding has receded before attempting to salvage. Supporting Info 2 Don't attempt to enter the flood zone until authorities have declared the area safe. Supporting Info 3 Don't return to a flood damaged home until it has been inspected for structural safety and hazards.



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