



Talking Points for Flooding

Talking points and message maps for local health professionals

These talking points may be inserted into message maps for outreach before, during, and after floods.

Pre-Flood Messages

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

During Flood Messages

- Follow evacuation guidance.
- Stay out of floodwaters if possible. Floodwaters may contain bacterial contaminants, hazardous substances, and hidden debris or sharp objects.
- Don't travel through floodwaters if possible. Obey warning and road closed signs.
- Don't attempt to save household possessions during an evacuation. 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 any buildings, be sure that they have 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.
- Begin to assess areas and items that need cleanup 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 concise and easy-to-understand language.



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 or listener 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 5th 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.

FLOOD MESSAGE MAP

The following message map could be used when sharing flood response and safety information with the public.

Main message: “At this time, the city/county/Tribal Nation _____ 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 Follow evacuation procedures and other instructions from emergency management, your local news media, or your local governmental leaders. Supporting Info 2 Those living alone can be isolated and unaware of the dangers posed by flooding. Find out what assistance they may need to evacuate in advance of a flood. Supporting Info 3
Message 2 Stay out of floodwaters if at all possible.	Supporting Info 1 Floodwaters may contain a variety of contaminants, including bacteria, viruses, hazardous waste, debris, and sharp objects. Supporting Info 2 Turn around, don't drown. Most flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is driven into floodwaters. Supporting Info 3 The second leading cause of drownings is from people walking into or nearby floodwaters.
Message 3 Don't attempt to save or salvage personal belongings during a flood.	Supporting Info 1 Wait until the floodwaters have receded before attempting to salvage belongings. 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 health hazards.

