

FLOODING

At one time or another major flooding has taken place on all streams in Harris County. Some of the worst flooding has taken place on Buffalo Bayou, Brays Bayou, White Oak Bayou, and Cypress Creek.

Over 70,000 residences flooded in Harris County during Tropical Storm Allison. If your property did not flood then, it could still flood in the future. If your property is located in the floodplain, this flyer gives you some ideas of what you can do to protect yourself and your property.

FLOOD MAPS

Harris County completed the appeals process for the preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) on March 23, 2005. Preliminary panels and data are expected to become effective in 2007. You may check to see if you are located in a special flood hazard area using the current effective maps and preliminary maps by logging onto www.tsarp.org or by making an appointment with a plan checker at the Permit Office by calling (713) 956-3000. Additional resources for information can be found at www.fema.gov and www.efloodmap.com.



FLOOD WARNING

In the event of severe weather, local radio and television stations KTRH (740 AM), KHOU (Channel 11), KPRC (Channel 2), and KTRK (Channel 13) interrupt scheduled programming with a severe weather alert. If you have access to a computer, you may also log onto the Harris County Office of Emergency Management website at www.hcoem.org.

FLOOD SAFETY TIPS

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.

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.

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 the local Power Company or the Harris County Office of Emergency Management (HCOEM).

Have electricity turned off by the Power Company. Some appliances, such as television sets, keep electrical charges even after being unplugged.

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.

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 the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.

PROTECT YOURSELF and YOUR PROPERTY

Always check with the Permit Office before you build, alter, grade, or fill on your property. Most alterations to your building or land require a floodplain management permit. The placement of fill or regrading your property in the floodplain always requires a permit. If you see construction or fill being placed without a County permit posted, contact the Permit Office at (713) 956-3000.

You may also contact the Permit Office to find out if the area you live in is prone to flooding. If it is, some temporary property protection measures such as flood-proofing and retrofitting can be discussed. Emergency measures may include moving belongings to a second level of the house and keeping valuable documents with you in the event of an evacuation.

Dumping debris in our ditches and streams is a violation and contributes to flooding problems. Flooding is exacerbated due to the area's flat terrain, impervious soils, heavy rainfall and annual threats of hurricanes and tropical storms. If you see debris in the ditches, contact the Precinct office near you. To report dumping in the streams, creeks and bayous, call the Harris County Flood Control District Citizens Services at (713) 684-4197.

If you don't have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. **Homeowners' insurance policies do not cover damage from floods.** However, because Harris County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), you can purchase a separate flood insurance policy. This insurance is backed by the Federal government and is available to everyone, even for properties that have been flooded.

Don't wait for the next flood to buy insurance protection. There is a 30-day waiting period before National Flood Insurance Program coverage takes effect.