

# Prepare Your Property for Flooding

**“Over 5 million people in England and Wales live and work in properties that are risk from flooding....”**

**In Somerset, around 15% of the land is at, or a few metres below sea level. Climate change may add to the number of properties at risk of flooding.**

**If your home is flooded, it can be costly and distressing**



**Be prepared, be Flood Aware and find out how you can protect your property.**

**Improve Knowledge   Increase Resilience   Minimise Damage**

**Proactive Approach**



[WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK](http://WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK)



# 1 Introduction



Over 5 million people in England and Wales live and work in properties that are at risk from flooding.

In Somerset, around 15% of the land is at, or a few metres below sea level. Climate change may add to the number of properties at risk of flooding.

This leaflet provides practical advice on how to make your home more resilient to the effects of flooding. Some of the measures can be simple and do not need specialist knowledge.

By following the advice in this guide you may be able to prepare yourself and your property against the risk of flooding which may minimise the cost and time of cleaning up your home after a flood.

## 1.1 Understanding your flood risk

The Environment Agency produce flood maps to help you understand your flood risk from rivers and the sea. Visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) or call **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188** to see if your property is at risk.

You do not need to live near a river or watercourse to experience flooding. In Somerset there are approximately 19,000 properties which are at risk from surface water flooding. Contact your lead local flood authority for advice and information on surface water flood risk using the contact details below.

Historical information may be valuable in understanding the issues in an area, records of previous flood events that have occurred locally may be held by your local Parish Council, your District Council, the Lead Local Flood Authority or the Environment Agency.

Furthermore, you can contract a professional to carry out a flood risk assessment for your property. This can help you assess your current and future flood risk.

For further information contact the Flood and Water Management Team at Somerset County Council on **0845 345 9155** or email [flooding@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:flooding@somerset.gov.uk)



## 2 Simple measures to protect your property

According to the Association of British Insurers (ABI), the average cost of repairing a home after a flood event is £30,000. Introducing measures to reduce damage could prove to be a worthwhile investment. Here are just a few simple measures you can employ to help protect your home and its contents.



### 2.1 If the risk of flooding is imminent:

#### Turn off essential services

If water is about to enter your property, turn off the gas, electricity and water at the mains. Don't know where they are? **Find out now!**

#### Move sentimental items upstairs or to a high place

Family photos, children's favourite teddies, and valuable jewellery. Flood water can permanently damage these irreplaceable items, keep them safe and put them in a high place before it is too late. The same applies for insurance documents, bank details and essential contact numbers.

#### Move furniture and carpets

Move furniture and electrical items out of the reach of flood water, if possible roll up carpets and rugs before they get damaged.

#### Protect doors

Even if laid correctly, sandbags on their own will not keep water out of your property. They will only filter flood water. To help keep water out, place a piece of plastic sheeting or plywood on the doors and keep it in place with sandbags or a heavy object.

***N.B. Not all district councils will supply sandbags. Be prepared and find out in advance where to get sandbags. Most DIY merchants will sell unfilled sandbags and sand, but remember, demand will be high in the event of a flood.***

## Flood water won't just enter the house through the doors

Put plugs in sinks and baths and weigh them down. A sandbag in a bin liner can be used as an improvised toilet bung. Disconnect outlets from washing machines and dishwasher and wrap a piece of plastic sheet at the end of the pipe and seal it using duct tape.

**Don't wait until flooding looks likely, plan ahead and use simple measures to make you and your property more resilient to the risk of flooding.**

### 2.2 Sign up for warnings

The Met Office warn the public and emergency responders of severe or hazardous weather which has the potential to cause danger to life or widespread disruption. They issue warnings for rain, fog, wind, snow and ice. To monitor severe weather warnings visit [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

If you are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea, the Environment Agency offer a **FREE** flood warning service.



**FLOOD ALERT**  
FLOODING IS POSSIBLE. BE PREPARED.



**FLOOD WARNING**  
FLOODING IS EXPECTED. IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED.



**SEVERE FLOOD WARNING**  
SEVERE FLOODING. DANGER TO LIFE.

You can receive warnings by telephone, text, email or fax. To find out more call **FLOODLINE** on **0845 988 1188** or visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

### 2.3 Build your own flood plan

When flood risk is imminent, time is short, be prepared and have a clear household flood plan of what to do in an emergency.

Emergency services have to respond on a risk basis, they may not reach you straight away. **Are you prepared to help yourself?** Take a short amount of time to fill in your emergency plan with useful contact details and familiarise yourself with the content.

Preparing for a flood can dramatically reduce the damage caused.

For help and advice contact the Civil Contingencies Unit at Somerset County Council on **0845 345 9188**

### 2.4 Prepare an emergency kit

**Do you take essential medicines?**

**Do you have small children?**

**What about household pets?**

Prepare emergency survival items in advance such as bottled water, waterproof torches (with batteries!), essential medicines, wind and rainproof clothing, important documents and a wind up or battery operated radio. Ensure your emergency kit is in easy reach; you may need to find it in the dark.

For help and advice contact the Civil Contingencies Unit at Somerset County Council on **0845 345 9188**



### 3 Diverting flood water away from your property

Sometimes landscaping techniques can be used to divert flood water away from your property.

However, before implementing any of these measures, do seek professional advice from a building surveyor, architect or other professional. You need to be aware that there are certain restrictions and bylaws that can affect what you can and cannot build. If you require further advice, please contact the relevant organisations which may include the District Council/ Local Planning Authority and the Drainage Board, details are provided under section 6 of this leaflet.

#### Landscaping



You may choose to landscape your garden and driveway to help divert water away from your property. However, if you direct it elsewhere, you must take care not to channel the flow of water in such a way that it could cause damage to anyone else's land or property.

#### Walls



Walls can be designed to create a flood resistant barrier around the property. They can also be used to divert flood water to an area that will experience less damage. But remember to get professional advice before constructing a wall!

#### Bunds



A flood defence bund is an earth embankment that can be used as an alternative to a wall. A pump may also be required to remove any seepage or rainwater.

#### Additional drainage



Pipes, ditches and drains can be used in some instances to collect and redirect flood water.

### 4 Preventing water from entering your property

Flood water can enter your property through:

- **Doors and Windows**
- **Airbricks**
- **Backflow through sewerage pipes**
- **Seepage through external walls and cable holes**
- **The floor**

Property Level Protection can be used to stop water from entering your property. When choosing flood protection products, look out for the kitemark symbol. This shows it has been properly tested and is up to the job.



The British Standards Institute (BSI) maintains a list of all manufacturers of flood protection products that have been tested and achieved Kitemark accreditation. Visit [www.kitemark.com](http://www.kitemark.com)

## Flood boards/barriers

Buy purpose built flood barriers that can be installed when flooding is imminent to seal doorways and windows. You can also raise door thresholds.

## Flood Doors

Buy doors that when locked are sealed and resistant to flood water. Although these are more costly than flood boards and barriers, they have the advantage of being permanently in place.

## Air Bricks

Approximately 5000 litres of flood water an hour can enter through an air brick. You can buy specially designed removable covers that are easy to place over ventilation bricks, but remember to remove the covers once the risk of flooding has gone because leaving covers on can lead to damp in cavities. Alternatively you can replace your existing airbricks with anti-flood airbricks which self activate under flood conditions and seal shut.

## Drains and Pipes

Fit non return valves to drains and water inlet and outlet pipes. Buy a toilet bung or use materials available to prevent sewage backflow coming back up the toilet under flood conditions.

## Water proofing treatment

Where the flood level may remain high for long period of time, consider applying water proofing sealants to walls to resist water seepage. The clear coating can be applied to external walls. You should also remedy any other weak points on a building such as cracks and cable entry points. Raise damp-proof brick courses, seal floors (tanking) or replace wooden floorboards with concrete to help delay flood water rising up from the ground.

# 5 Preparing to reduce the damage flood water can cause

**Can't keep water out?** When it reaches certain depths, it is often safer to let the water into your property otherwise you risk structural damage. There are measures that can be taken to make your home **FLOOD RESILIENT**. This will reduce the damage caused by flood water and may decrease the time taken to recover.

## Flooring

Flood water ruins carpets. Replace carpets with tiled floors and use rugs that can be quickly and easily removed before a flood.

## Sump and Pump

If flood water enters your property, you may need help getting it out again. Pumps can be fitted into an under floor void to extract flood water. Once the flood water has been removed, flood resilient flooring, such as tiles can be washed and disinfected.



## Walls

Use water resistant paint for internal ground floor decoration. Fit water resistant skirting boards, or varnish them. If plaster boards are fitted horizontally rather than vertically it is easier to replace lower sections that are more prone to flood damage.

## Electrics

Raise electrical sockets to a height of at least 1 metre.

## Kitchen and bathroom

Use water resistant materials such as stainless steel or plastic. These can be wiped down and disinfected after flood water has gone. Removable cupboards are also an option. Raise white goods on plinths to reduce damage.

## Door and windows

Choose frames made from man made materials that will not be damaged by flood water. Fit internal doors that are easily removable.

## Shelving

Fit high mounted shelving on to walls, store valuable and irreplaceable items on shelves.

# 6 Roles & Responsibilities

The world of flooding and drainage is a complex one with a number of agencies responsible for different stages. The reduction of flood risk is not just the responsibility of organisations and authorities. If you own land which is adjacent to a watercourse, you have certain legal obligations to maintain that watercourse.

Anyone who owns land which has a watercourse running through it or alongside it, can be deemed to be a riparian owner.

You can find advice and information about what this means in the Environment Agency's publication, 'Living on the Edge'.

**Please note it is the responsibility of the homeowner to protect their property from flooding.**

## 6.1 What do your the Lead Local Flood Authority do?

The Flood & Water Management Act 2010 defines the county council as lead local flood authority with a number of new responsibilities.

As the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Somerset County Council has a role in overseeing the management of local flood risk, including: surface water runoff, groundwater flooding and ordinary watercourses (streams and ditches).

All LLFA's are required to:

- Investigate significant flood incidents as deemed necessary or appropriate, identifying which flood risk management authorities have relevant functions
- Issue land drainage consent to carry out works in an ordinary watercourse and enforce action to rectify unlawful and potentially damaging work to a watercourse..
- Ensure riparian owners undertake maintenance of ordinary watercourses to ensure the proper flow of water.
- Offer advice on property level protection to residents. It is not always possible to resolve flood risk but there are ways to make your property more resilient.
- Become the SuDS approving body (SAB) (due to be enacted 2014). Approve Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for new developments and redevelopments to comply with national standards, adopt and maintain approved SuDS that serve more than one property in order to better manage flood risk.

For further information contact the Flood and Water Management Team at Somerset County Council on **0845 345 9155**, email: [flooding@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:flooding@somerset.gov.uk) or visit [www.somerset.gov.uk/floodrisk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/floodrisk)

## 6.2 Who else has a part to play in flood and water management?

### Environment Agency

- Amongst its functions, the Environment Agency has powers to manage flood risk from designated main rivers and the sea.
- Provide Flood maps, Flood warnings and Flood Alerts

To find out more visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) or call **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188**

### District Councils

- Can implement and maintain flood defences on ordinary watercourses which are not the responsibility of Internal Drainage Boards, including clearance of blocked watercourses as specified in the Land Drainage Act of 1991 & 1994.
- Are the local planning authority for their district, managing drainage and flood risk from new developments. It should also be noted that planning permission should be obtained from the district council for certain homeowner works.
- Can make improvements to watercourses to mitigate flood risk.

To find out more contact your District Authority.

### Internal Drainage Boards (IDB's)

- Supervise all matters relating to drainage in their areas, including those of an environmental and recreational nature.
- IDB's are independent public bodies responsible for managing water levels in low-lying areas.



For more information on the Somerset Drainage Board, call **01278 789906**, email [drainage.boards@btconnect.com](mailto:drainage.boards@btconnect.com) or visit [www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk](http://www.somersetdrainageboards.gov.uk)

### Somerset Highways

- Maintain drainage systems capable of removing water from the surface of the highway.

To report a blocked highway drain or gully call your area highways office on **0845 345 9155** (not 24hr service)

### Water Companies

- Make sure their systems have the appropriate level of resilience to flooding, and maintain essential services during emergencies.
- Maintain and manage their water supply and sewerage systems to manage the impact and reduce the risk of flooding and pollution to the environment.

For more information please contact your local water company.

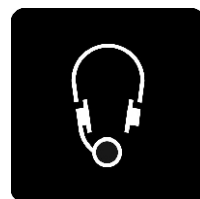
## For further information:

The National Flood Forum provides a comprehensive list of property level protection products in 'The Blue Pages' directory. Visit [www.floodforum.org.uk](http://www.floodforum.org.uk)  
Or call **01299 403055**

For information on insurance and resilient repair contact the Association of British Insurers [www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk) or call **020 7600 3333**

For additional information on protecting a residential or commercial property, visit the Flood Protection Association website [www.thefpa.org.uk](http://www.thefpa.org.uk) or call **033 33 23 87 01**

If you have difficulty reading this publication we can; supply it in large print, on audio cassette, arrange translation or provide a member of staff to discuss the details.



For more details contact Somerset County Council on **0845 345 9155**

# Emergency Contact Details

Emergency Services ( <i>if life is at risk</i> )	999
Environment Agency - Floodline	0845 988 1188
County Council ( <i>emergency only</i> )	08000 921 776
Wessex Water	0845 600 4 600

**E-mail:** [operational.enquiries@wessexwater.co.uk](mailto:operational.enquiries@wessexwater.co.uk)  
**Minicom:** (for those with impaired hearing) - **0845 730 0619**  
**Sewage floodline** (in a property) - **0845 850 5959**  
**Leakstoppers** - Call **0800 692 0692** (24 hours)  
[leakstoppers@wessexwater.co.uk](mailto:leakstoppers@wessexwater.co.uk)

## Non-Emergency Contacts

Environment Agency 03708 506 506\*\* (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm)

### District Councils:

Mendip District Council	01749 648999
Taunton Deane Borough Council	01823 356356
Sedgemoor District Council	0845 408 2540
South Somerset District Council	01935 462462
West Somerset Council	01643 703704

Flood Protection Association 033 33 23 87 01

Flood Risk Management Team 0845 345 9155 (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm)

National Flood Forum 01299 403 055

Police (*non-emergency*) 101

Somerset Civil Contingencies Unit 0845 345 9188

Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium 01278 789906

Somerset Highways (*to report a blocked highway drain or gully call your area highways office*) 0845 345 9155



[www.flood-aware.com](http://www.flood-aware.com)