

Know Your Flood Zone

The first and most important information to obtain is how likely it is that your home will be flooded. If your property is located within the FEMA floodplain, there is a 1% annual chance your property will be damaged by flooding. While your property may be high enough that it has not flooded recently, it could still flood in the future because not all flood events are the same.

Tallahassee's flooding sources include drainage ditches, streams and lakes such as East Ditch, Northeast Ditch, West Ditch, Central Drainage Ditch, Alford Arm Tributary, Saint Augustine Branch, Lake Lafayette, Lake Jackson and Lake Munson. Most of the flooding in Tallahassee is caused by rising or flowing water. Other properties located outside the flood zone can flood due to their topography. The factors that can contribute to flooding include poor site grading, landscaping issues and incorrect construction of driveways.

For more information on the potential for flooding at your home, call the City's Growth Management Department at 891-7001, press "3", visit Talgov.com or go to tlcgis.org "FEMA Flood Zones" and use the search tool to find your address for more information.

History

The City of Tallahassee is 30 miles inland from the coast and receives an average of 62 inches of rainfall per year. It is one of the rainiest cities in the United States. Tropical weather events such as hurricanes and tropical storms are most prevalent from June 1 to November 30. Recent major storms include Tropical Storms Allison and Barry (2001) and Tropical Storm Fay (2008). The wettest year on record was in 1964. Tallahassee had 104 inches of rainfall that year.

Drainage System Maintenance

Several of the City's flood damage mitigation and management efforts depend on your cooperation and assistance. Here are a few ways you can help:

- **Do not dump or throw anything into drainage conveyances** (streams, ditches, inlets) – this is a violation of City code. Even grass clippings and branches can accumulate and obstruct downstream channels or pipes. Drainage conveyances obstructed or restricted with debris and other materials lose their ability to function as designed.
- The City has a Stormwater Conveyance Maintenance Program that will remove obstructions such as debris, trees and other materials. If you observe an obstruction of a drainage conveyance, call the City's Public Works Operations at 891-5300.
- If you observe an illicit discharge of debris into drainage conveyances, call the City at 891-4YOU. Call Leon County at 606-1500, if you live outside of the city limits.

Floodplain Development Permit Requirements

Alterations to your building or land may require a permit from the City's Growth Management Department.

- Always contact Growth Management before you build on, alter, grade or place fill on your property. A permit may be required to ensure that these activities do not cause flooding issues to other surrounding properties.
- If you see building or filling activities occurring without a City permit sign posted, call the Land Use and Environmental Services Division of the Growth Management Department at 891-7001, press "3."

Substantial Improvement/Damage Requirements

Any "substantially" improved or damaged home must be brought up to the NFIP and City's Flood Ordinance requirements. "Substantial" refers to the "50% rule." This rule states that if the lowest finished floor on an existing house is below the base flood elevation (BFE) and if the cost of the repairs or renovations equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure before the improvement or repair is started, the lowest finished floor elevation must be raised or elevated to at least the BFE. Also please note that additional City floodplain requirements may apply.

During an event, you can follow @COTNews on Twitter for emergency alerts. Please call Your Own Utilities at 891-4YOU (4968) to update your contact information for emergency notifications. Other local emergency alerts are available from WCTV, WTXL, the National Weather Service, www.redcross.org/fl/tallahassee and www.talgov.com/emergency/EmergencyHome.aspx.



Flood Prevention and Preparedness Information



Stormwater Management
408 North Adams Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 891-6860
Talgov.com/YOU



The City of Tallahassee operates and maintains a comprehensive, proactive Stormwater Management program that helps local property owners save on flood insurance premiums. This brochure can help save lives and money.

Flood Safety

- **Monitor weather reports** if a severe weather event is forecasted for the Tallahassee area. If the forecast predicts with certainty that a flood will threaten your property, turn off electricity at the breaker and move valuable contents to a safe place. You may have very little advanced warning of a possible flood event, so a detailed checklist prepared in advance will help ensure that you do not forget anything.
- **Do not walk or drive through a flooded area. Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths.** Currents can be deceptive: fast moving water 6" deep can knock you off your feet, 12" deep can carry away a small car or SUV, 18" deep can sweep away a larger vehicle. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Do not drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out, or the water may be deep enough to float your vehicle off the road. Do not walk through flowing water.
- **Electrocution is the number two flood killer, after drowning.** Electric current can travel through water. Report downed power lines at 891-4YOU (4968) or the Tallahassee Police Department at 891-4200. Be alert for gas leaks. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Do not smoke or use candles, lanterns or open flames unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.
- **Be careful and look before you step.** After a flood, the ground and floors may be covered with debris including broken glass and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery. Also look out for animals. Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Watch out for snakes and other animals that may be hiding under debris.
- **Practice safety during floods and stay calm.** Turn off the electricity at the breaker. Some appliances, such as TV sets, keep electrical charges even after they have been unplugged. Do not use appliances or motors that have become wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned and dried.

Buy Flood Insurance

Having a flood insurance policy is extremely beneficial in protecting your property. If you do not have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. However, because Tallahassee participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), you may 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. You can receive flood insurance information by calling NFIP at 1-800-427-4661.

The City of Tallahassee participates in the Community Rating System (CRS) program of the NFIP. The CRS rewards communities that reduce the likelihood of flood damage and create public awareness beyond NFIP requirements. Sending this brochure to our citizens is one such awareness activity. As a result of Stormwater Management's Flood Control Projects and Public Works Drainage Operations' Maintenance Programs, **Tallahassee citizens and businesses receive up to a 20 percent discount on flood insurance.** Some property owners have purchased flood insurance because it was required by banks when they obtained a mortgage or home improvement loan. Usually these policies just cover the building's structure and not the contents. The flood events that occur in Tallahassee typically result in more damage to furniture and contents than structures.

If you have flood insurance, check the amount and extent of coverage and make sure you have coverage for the contents. Remember, even if the last flood missed you or you have installed flood proofing devices, the next flood could be worse. There is normally a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance goes into effect, so it is essential to plan ahead.

Property Protection Measures

In order to protect your property, electrical panel boxes, heat pumps, washers, dryers and water heaters should be elevated or relocated to areas less likely to flood. It is a good idea to keep materials around the house like sandbags, plywood, lumber and plastic sheeting. These items can help minimize the damage caused by flood waters and by hurricane force winds. Personnel from the City's Stormwater Management can make site visits upon request to assist property owners with flooding, drainage and storm sewer problems to address any site-specific flooding concerns within the Tallahassee city limits. There is also a low interest loan program available through Stormwater Management, which provides the services of a professional engineer to evaluate your property and construction plans to address your flooding issues.

Be familiar with information on flood proofing, flood insurance and flood safety. There are several ways to protect a building from flood damage. One way is to keep the water away by regrading your lot or by building a small floodwall or earthen berm. These methods work if your lot is fairly small, if flooding is not too deep and if your property is not in the floodway.

Flood Proofing

There are several methods by which you can flood proof your property, including water proofing your walls, installing water tight doors and raising your home. Some of these methods can be very expensive, so the guidance of a professional engineer may be required. Additional information is available online under "Flood Proofing."

Natural and Beneficial Functions

Our natural floodplains reduce damage by allowing flood waters to spread out over large areas like Black Swamp or the Koger Center wetlands. This facilitates absorption into the ground, reduces flow rates and serves as a flood storage area to reduce downstream peaks. To protect our natural wetlands and animal habitat, we should all do our part to help keep our floodplain and floodplain waters free of contaminants such as oil, paint, anti-freeze and pesticides.

Answers to Floodplain Questions

To determine if your property is located in a floodplain, flood maps and flood protection references are available at fema.gov., the reference section of the Leon County Public Library and the City's Growth Management Department at 435 North Maccomb Steet. City staff can provide information such as FEMA base (100-year) flood elevation, type of flood zone, flood depths, wetlands information, flood insurance and special rules for building and copies of elevation certificates on file. Flood protection assistance in the form of site visits, list of contractors to assist, the on-site loan program and educational outreach programs are available from Stormwater Management. In addition, the federally funded Flood Mitigation Assistance Program (FMAP) provides grants to eligible projects. Information on the program is available at fema.gov/flood-mitigation-assistance-program.

The Flood Warning System

The City of Tallahassee maintains an active Emergency Management Plan and monitors flash flood warnings from the National Weather Service www.weather.gov. When warnings are received, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) disseminates the information to all radio and television stations in Tallahassee. The EAS designated radio stations for long-term emergency events (in case other stations are off the air) are WTNT-94.9 FM and WFSU-88.9 FM. Be sure to turn on your radio and/or television when severe weather threatens. For more information during non-emergency times, you may call the City of Tallahassee Emergency Management Coordinator at 891-2536.

For more information, please contact the City's Stormwater Management at 891-6860 or visit Talgov.com. You can also mail us for information at: City of Tallahassee, Stormwater Management, 300 S. Adams St. (B-35), Tallahassee, FL 32301-1731. More information can be found on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website at fema.gov.

