



# 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...”

<b>Key Messages</b> <i>Three key messages</i>	<b>Supporting Information</b> <i>Three pieces of supporting information for each key message</i>
<b>Message 1</b> Follow broadcasted evacuation guidance.	<b>Supporting Info 1</b> Follow evacuation procedures and other instructions from emergency management, your local news media, or your local governmental leaders.  <b>Supporting Info 2</b> 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.  <b>Supporting Info 3</b>
<b>Message 2</b> Stay out of floodwaters if at all possible.	<b>Supporting Info 1</b> Floodwaters may contain a variety of contaminants, including bacteria, viruses, hazardous waste, debris, and sharp objects.  <b>Supporting Info 2</b> Turn around, don't drown. Most flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is driven into floodwaters.  <b>Supporting Info 3</b> The second leading cause of drownings is from people walking into or nearby floodwaters.
<b>Message 3</b> Don't attempt to save or salvage personal belongings during a flood.	<b>Supporting Info 1</b> Wait until the floodwaters have receded before attempting to salvage belongings.  <b>Supporting Info 2</b> Don't attempt to enter the flood zone until authorities have declared the area safe.  <b>Supporting Info 3</b> Don't return to a flood-damaged home until it has been inspected for structural safety and health hazards.

