

## Hampshire County, West Virginia Flood Protection Information

### Flood Safety:

*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 water can knock you off your feet. In standing water use a pole or stick to ensure the ground has not given way.

*Do not drive through a flooded area.* More people drown in their cars than anywhere else, do not drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed away.

*Stay away from power lines and electrical wires.* The number two flood killer is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water, so report any downed lines to the Fire Company or Allegheny Power at 1-800-255-3443. Remember also some appliances can hold a charge, so do not use electric motors or appliances that have been wet until they are checked by an electrician.

*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. Remember they may be scared and may not act normal, do not put yourself between the animal and its escape route.

*Look before you step.* After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.

*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.

*Shut off Electric and Gas.* If a flood event is eminent shut off Gas and Electric to prevent damage to the structure and protect against explosion or electrocution.

*Potable water can be a health hazard.* Be sure to check with water department or health department, or to boil or sterilize water before using for consumption.

*Radio broadcasts.* Listen to the radio for National Weather Service broadcast bulletins to hear information on flooding conditions.



Visit Hampshire County Planning at [www.hampshirecountywv.org](http://www.hampshirecountywv.org).

Hampshire County has been subject to various types of flooding in recent years, the January 1996 flood was due to an accumulation of snowfall followed by unseasonable warm weather accompanied by rain, at the Springfield river gauge the river crested at 28.41 feet, flood stage is 15 feet. The drainage areas of the South Branch of the **How can you help us?** Floodplain management depends on the public cooperation.

Always check with the Hampshire County Planning Office before you build, alter, or excavate your property. Building permits for all construction are required by law in Hampshire County and violations could prevent Hampshire County from receiving assistance in the event of a natural disaster. This would affect the entire county. So if you see construction or excavation being performed without a building permit displayed, please contact the planning office at 304-822-7018. Remember any addition to a structure exceeding fifty percent of the market value of a structure is considered new construction and must comply with the Hampshire County Floodplain Ordinance. Hampshire County as well has Building Code enforcement which regulates construction in the flood plain.

Keep waterways clear of debris and obstructions. This leads to an increase in the flood height. Do not dump or discard trash into waterways, ditches, or streams. This could lead to a plugged culvert or natural area that would otherwise not be subject to flooding. This also inhibits the natural and beneficial functions of these waterways. If you see an area that could contribute to an increase in flooding please feel free to notify the planning office. The State regulates the dumping of materials in waterways as well as the Hampshire County Salvage Yard Ordinance. Debris in the waterway may also influence the water quality which may further infringe upon state and federal laws.



**Information:** Flood information can be obtained from the Hampshire County Planning Office and in reference sections at the local public libraries.

The Potomac, the South Branch of the Potomac, Little Cacapon, Capon, and North River drainage areas were all affected by this flood event as well as the November 1985 and September 1996 events. In the November 1985 and the September 1996 floods substantial amounts of rainfall was the cause of these major flooding events. The Springfield gauge recorded 44.22 feet in the Nov. 85 flood; major flood stage is 25 feet. The September 96 flood registered 34.98 feet. Remember even small tributaries to these rivers can cause substantial flooding problems.

One important fact to remember, even if your property was not effected by either of these floods it does not mean that you are safe from flooding. Localized events or additional runoff from developed areas have an adverse affect on flood events and can alter both the location and severity of any one given flood. Please read this information and discover some ideas on how you could protect yourself.

While both weather conditions and the number of fatalities vary from year to year the national thirty year average for flood deaths is 127. That compares with a thirty year average for lightning. The thirty year average for tornadoes is 65 and 16 for hurricanes.



**Step One:** If you are interesting in building or buying land within Hampshire County the first step in any flood protection program is to check with the Hampshire County Planning Office and see if the property is in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). We are located in the Court House and are always willing to help individuals concerned about the floodplain. We can provide brochures, elevation certificate applications, and information on flood proofing your structure. We can also show on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) where your property is located and its proximity to a mapped Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). We will also conduct site visits to help you reduce the risk of flooding. All of these services are free. Also please keep in mind even though you may not be in a SFHA you do have the possibility of being affected by flooding and flood insurance is available to you. So feel free to stop in the Hampshire County Planning Office located in Romney in the Court House or call 304-822-7018. We can also be reached by email at [charlie@hampshirecountywv.org](mailto:charlie@hampshirecountywv.org).

**Floodproofing:** There are several ways in which someone may flood proof a building from flood damage. The first of these would of course be to situate your building out of a SFHA if possible. The second would be to elevate or grade the property so that the property would rise out of the SFHA, this is only allowable outside the floodway area and if the flood waters are not deep and of high velocities. The third possibility is to waterproof the building; this is normally costly and is only recommended for commercial structures. The last solution is to elevate the building above the base flood elevation. This can be seen in various parts of the county along the riverbanks, some may be even hard to tell they have elevated. This is the most cost effective normally and over the course of your mortgage will pay for itself. Remember elevate to a higher standard and you could even save more while providing additional protection. Emergency flood proofing may also be required; this may consist of but is not limited to sandbags or temporary dikes/levees. Remember you can not divert floodwater from your property onto another. Additional information can be found about these measures at the public libraries and the planning office. Remember to obtain your building permit before construction and to check with the planning office at the Hampshire County Courthouse Annex and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, located over the Department of Motor Vehicles on top of the mountain outside Romney on U.S. 50, before disturbing soil.

**Warning:** The Hampshire County Office of Emergency Service has a warning system in case of flooding. You will receive a phone call on an automated system. It is always recommended to be cognoscente of your surroundings and be aware of a possible flood event. If possible prior to the event without detriment to safety remove cars and recreational vehicles from the floodplain. Keep a radio and listen for National Weather Service Advisories. Also keep an eye on the web site <http://newweb.erh.noaa.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=lwx> for NOAA Advanced Hydrologic Prediction for our area.

**Flood Insurance:** If you do not have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Anyone can purchase it, even if you are not in a SFHA. Homeowner's insurance does not cover flooding or damage caused by flooding. Flood insurance is backed by the Federal government and can be obtained even for properties that have already been flooded. There is a thirty day waiting period before the National Flood Insurance Program coverage takes effect, so inquire as soon as possible. There is also a 26% possibility that your property will be affected by flooding during the life of a thirty year mortgage.



Visit [www.co.hampshire.wv.us](http://www.co.hampshire.wv.us) on the web for an approximate flood map. Photos courtesy of the Hampshire County Office of Emergency Mgmt, The Hampshire Review, and Capon Springs Vol. Fire.