

# City of Van Buren Floodplain Information

## Social Media Public Outreach



**Management Team:**  
Floodplain Administrator  
David Martin, CFM

The City of Van Buren is required to provide this Public Outreach document to maintain our Community Rating for Floodplain Management. Flooding does occur in certain areas of our city. These areas are along Lou Emma Creek in the north part of the city, Town Branch, and Flat Rock Creek in the south part of the city. These creeks can leave their banks during heavy storms and may cause localized flooding. Flooding in all three areas can come with little to no warning and can cause flooding within an hour after a thunderstorm begins. Floodwater can be dangerous. Even though they appear to move slowly (three feet per second), a flood two feet deep can knock a man off his feet and float a car. Your property may be high enough that it was not flooded recently. However, it can still be flooded in the future because the next flood could be worse. Annually the city will see flash flooding throughout various portions of the city, to include areas around Lee Creek, the Arkansas River Basin, and throughout the downtown area. If you are in a floodplain, the odds are that someday your property will be damaged. This flyer gives you some ideas of what you can do to protect yourself. Information on whether your property is in the 100-year floodplain can be obtained by coming into the Van Buren City Offices and having the Building Inspector help you. Maps and other flood-related information are available for your review. Van Buren also has Elevation Certificates for some development available.

Contact Information:  
Building Department  
City of Van Buren Municipal Complex  
1003 Broadway  
Van Buren, AR 72956

### Where to view floodplain?

Any floodplain manager in the office would be happy to assist in showing you where the floodplain may impact on your property. No appointment is necessary, please feel free to come to our offices on Monday – Thursday 8AM – 5PM or Friday 8AM – 4:30PM. Want to find it yourself? Feel free to view our ‘Floodplain Files’ page on our city website [www.vanburencity.org](http://www.vanburencity.org) under the ‘Services’ link. If you need assistance using this feature, you can also call the Building Department at (479) 474-8943. If you feel that our provided tools do not meet your requirements, you can also find information on [www.msc.fema.gov](http://www.msc.fema.gov).

### Community Rating System

The City of Van Buren is proud to be rated Class 9 in the NFIP Community Rating System allowing our citizens to purchase flood insurance at a discount. For more information visit [www.vanburencity.org](http://www.vanburencity.org) and visit the page listed under ‘Government’ titled ‘Floodplain Management’. The CRS program is managed by David Martin, CFM.

### Floodplain Permit Requirements

All development within the 100-yr. floodplain (not just construction of buildings, but filling, excavation, fences, etc.) is required to obtain a permit. Applications must be made prior to doing any work in a floodplain area. Please contact the City Building Inspector at (479) 474-8943 to receive all the information you will need in order to properly develop in the floodplain. *You may report any illegal development activities to the above number as well.*

### Flood Safety

- Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. If your house is about to be flooded, turn off the power at the service box. Electrical current can travel through water. Electrocution is the 2nd leading cause of death during floods.
- Be alert to gas leaks. Turn off the gas to your house before it floods. If you smell gas, report it to a city official or your gas company. Do not use candles, lanterns, or open flames if you smell gas or are unsure if your gas has been shut off.
- Keep children away from flood waters, ditches, culverts, and storm drains. Flood waters can carry items that have dislodged themselves. Culverts may suck smaller people into them rendering them helpless.
- Clean everything that has been wet. Flood water may be contaminated with sewage or chemicals which pose severe health threats.
- Look out for animals, especially snakes. Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours.
- Do not use gas engines, such as generators, or charcoal fires indoors during power outages. Carbon monoxide exhaust can pose serious health hazards.

### City Flood Services

The first thing you should do is check for local flood hazards. Flood protection references are available at the Van Buren Public Library and the City Building Department office. You can visit the Building Department at the Municipal Complex, to see if you are in a mapped floodplain. If so, they can give you more information about problems in your area. Additionally, the Street Department can provide sandbags to help protect your property. The Street Department can be reached by calling 479-471-5009.



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### Property Protection Measures

If your property is susceptible to flooding, there are many flood damage reduction measures you can employ.

- Watertight seals can be applied to brick and block walls to protect against low-level flooding.
- Utilities such as heating and air conditioning systems, water heaters and other major appliances can be elevated to higher floors in the structure or on raised platforms.
- Temporary measures such as moving furniture and other valuables to higher floors or sandbagging exterior openings will also help.
- Elevating or relocating the entire structure may also be a feasible option.

### Natural & Beneficial Functions

Floodplains play a valuable role in providing natural and beneficial functions to the area around, and including, Van Buren. Floodplains that are relatively undisturbed provide a wide range of benefits to both human and natural systems. These benefits provide aesthetic pleasure as well as function to provide active processes such as filtering nutrients. These floodplains enhance waterfowl, fish and other wildlife habitats and provide feeding/breeding grounds. And lastly, these floodplains provide natural erosion control and open space, so further flooding damage does not occur. The city contains two lakes, Lake Cap Bedell and Lake Lou Emma. The lakes were built to assist with retention of storm water runoff and recreation for the citizens.

### Substantial Improvement/Damage

The NFIP requires that if the cost of improvements to a building or the cost to repair damages (from any cause) to a building exceeds 50% of the market value of the building (excluding land value), the entire building must be brought up to current floodplain management standards. Building improvement projects include exterior and interior remodeling, rehabilitation, additions and repair and reconstruction projects. Additionally, the cost of currently planned improvements will be added to the cost of previously made improvements and compared to the existing market value to determine if the improvements exceed 50% of the structure's value. Please contact the City Building Inspector at (479) 474-8943 for further information.

### Drainage System Maintenance

As simple as it may sound, simply keeping smaller ditches and streams free of debris can dramatically improve the run-off capacity of low-lying areas, as well as greatly reduce the occurrence blockage that significantly contributes to flooding. It is illegal to dump materials into any storm drain or waterway and violators may be fined. If you see someone in the act of dumping or see debris in one of our watercourses, please contact the City of Van Buren at (479) 474-8943.



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### Flood Insurance

If you choose to have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Most homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. Flood insurance is only available to those communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Because of our floodplain management programs that attempt to protect us from the multiple flooding hazards, Van Buren is part of the NFIP and thus, residents are able to obtain flood insurance. Additionally, because the City participates in FEMA's CRS program, flood insurance premiums are discounted.

Be sure to check your policy to ensure you have adequate coverage. Usually, these policies cover the building structure, but not the contents. Contents coverage can also be obtained. There is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance coverage becomes effective. Plan ahead; do not wait until a flood is predicted before purchasing flood insurance. If you are building inside the floodplain, the purchase of flood insurance is mandatory if using a federally regulated/insured bank for a loan.

### Storm Warning System

Many times, flooding along the Arkansas River within Van Buren can be predicted days in advance, giving ample warning for preparation and evacuation. However, in the event of a flash flood due to a large rain event, you may be the first to notice the oncoming situation and have only hours to execute your plan. Notify the Van Buren Police/Fire Department. The City's Emergency Alert System will be activated. You will also see regular interruption on local radio and television stations advising you of the situation. In addition, you can turn to local television channels KFSM and KHBS, as well as radio stations KISR 93.7 and KMAG 99.1 for storm warning information.