

City of Van Buren Flood Protection Information

Flooding does occur in certain areas of our city. These areas are along Louemma Creek in the north part of the city and Town Branch and Flat Rock Creek in the south part of the city. These creeks can leave their banks during heavy storms and caused localized flooding. Flooding in all three areas can come with little warning and can cause flooding within an hour after a thunderstorm begins. Floodwaters 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. If you are in the 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.

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 also visit the Building Department in City Hall, 1003 Broadway, 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 sand bags to help protect your property. The Street Department can be reached by calling 479-471-5009.

What You Can Do: Several of the City's efforts depend on your cooperation and your assistance. Here is how you can help:

- Do not dump or throw anything into the ditches or streams. Dumping in our ditches and streams is a violation of Van Buren City Ordinance 21.35. Even grass clippings and branches can accumulate and block channels. Debris in drainage channels contributes to flooding.
- If your property is next to a ditch or stream, please do your part and keep the banks clear of brush and debris. The City has a stream maintenance program that can help remove major blockages such as downed trees.
- If you see dumping or debris in the ditches or streams, contact Code Enforcement at (479) 474-1234.
- Always check with the Building Department before you build on, alter, grade, or fill on your property. A permit is required to ensure that projects do not cause problems on other properties.
- If you see building or filling without a City permit sign posted, contact the Building Dept. at 479-474-8943.
- Check out the following information on:

Flood proofing: There are several different ways to protect a building from flood damage. One way is to keep the water away from your building is by grading your lot or building a small floodwall or earthen berm. These methods work if your lot is large enough, if flooding is not too deep, and if your property is not in the floodway. The

Building Department can provide floodplain information. You may contact them at (479) 474-8943.

Another approach is to make your walls waterproof and place watertight closures over the doorways. This method is not recommended for houses with basements or if water will reach a depth over two feet deep.

Some houses, even those not in the floodplain, have sewers that back up into the building during heavy rains. The Building Department can provide information to help address plumbing problems.

These measures are called flood proofing or retrofitting. More information is available at the Van Buren Public Library and the Building Department office. Any alteration to your building or land requires a permit from the Building Department. Grading or filling in the floodplain also requires a permit.

If you know a flood is coming, you should shut off the gas and electricity and move valuable contents upstairs. It is unlikely that you will get much warning, so a detailed checklist prepared in advance would help ensure that you don't forget anything.

Flood Insurance: If you don't have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. However, because Van Buren participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, you can 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.

Some people have purchased flood insurance because the bank required it when they received a mortgage or home improvement loan. Usually these policies just cover the building's structure and not the contents. During the kind of flooding that happens in Van Buren, there is usually more damage to the furniture and contents than there is to the structure.

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 moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still there.

Do not drive through a flooded area. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Don't drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out.

Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. The second leading cause of death after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to the Power Company or City immediately.

Have your electricity turned off by the Power Company. Some appliances, such as television sets, keep electrical charges even after they have been unplugged. Don't use appliances or motors that have gotten wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned, and dried.

Watch 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 turn things over and scare away small animals.

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.