



# NEWS from SEMO

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## NEW YORKERS ADVISED TO BE PREPARED FOR SEASONAL FLOODING *Flood Awareness Week Observed in State March 15-21*

This week's late winter rains, warming temperatures and shifting icepacks serve as a reminder to New Yorkers to review their emergency plans to be prepared for flooding.

"Coastal and inland flooding is the number one natural threat in the State," said John R. Gibb, Director of the New York State Emergency Management Office (SEMO). "At this time of year, snowmelt coupled with ice thaws and much-welcomed warmed temperatures can cause flooding, sometimes with little or no warning, and affect the safety of our residents, their homes and property, and their communities.

"People should find out how much of a threat flooding is to their location. Once they know how many feet they are above or below flood levels, they need to pay attention to their local radio and television broadcasts for information from local officials regarding possible flood threats," Gibb said. "One of the best ways to stay informed is to subscribe to NY-ALERT, the State's alert and notification system, at [www.nyalert.gov](http://www.nyalert.gov)."

Gibb offered this advice as SEMO joined with the five National Weather Service offices in New York State that are observing Flood Awareness Week, which begins Sunday and runs through March 21.

The SEMO Director also offered these following safety tips:

- Learn the safest route from your home or business to high, safe ground should you have to leave in a hurry.
- Develop an emergency plan and identify a meeting place if family members become separated. Have emergency supplies on hand.
- Plan what to do with your pets.
- Keep your automobile fueled. If electric power is cut off, gasoline stations may not be able to pump fuel for several days. Have a small disaster supply kit in the trunk of your car.

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## **BEFORE THE FLOOD**

- Stay informed! Monitor the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather Radio or your local radio and TV station broadcasts for information.
- If local officials advise evacuation, do so promptly.
- If directed to a specific location, go there.
- If there is time, move essential items and furniture to the upper floors of the house. Disconnect electrical appliances that cannot be moved. Do not touch them if you are wet or standing in water.
- If you are told to shut off water, gases, or electrical services before leaving your home, then do so.
- Secure your home: lock all doors and windows.

## **TRAVEL WITH CARE**

- Leave early to avoid being marooned on flooded roads. Follow recommended routes. Do not sightsee.
- As you travel, monitor local radio broadcasts for the latest information.
- Watch for washed-out roads, earthslides, broken water or sewer mains, loose or downed electrical wires, and falling or fallen objects.
- Watch for areas where rivers or streams may suddenly rise and flood, such as highway dips, bridges, and low areas.
- Do not attempt to drive over a flooded road. Turn around and go another way. Water moving at two miles per hour can sweep cars off a road or bridge.
- If you are in your car and water begins to rise rapidly around you, abandon the vehicle immediately.

## **AFTER THE FLOOD**

- Stay informed! Listen to the radio or TV for instructions from local officials.
- Wait until an area has been declared safe before entering it. Be careful driving, since roads may be damaged and power lines may be down.
- Before entering a building, check for structural damage. Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter or tank. Let the building air out to remove foul odors or escaping gas. Upon entering the building, use a battery-powered flashlight. Do not use an open flame as a source of light. Gas may be trapped inside.
- When inspecting the building, wear rubber boots and gloves. Watch for electrical shorts and live wires before making certain the main power switch is off.
- Do not turn on electrical appliances until an electrician has checked the system and appliances.
- Throw out any medicine or food that has had contact with floodwaters. Test drinking water for potability. Wells should be pumped out and water tested for drinking.
- If the public water system is declared "unsafe" by health officials, water for drinking and cooking should be boiled vigorously for 10 minutes.

For more safety information on floods and other hazards, visit SEMO's website at [www.semo.state.ny.us](http://www.semo.state.ny.us)

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