

Lexington County Floodplain Management

Local Flood Hazard

Most flooding in Lexington County is caused by heavy rains escaping the banks of Yost, Rawls, and K2 creeks in the Irmo area. There has also been flooding in the Lloydwoods Subdivision and surrounding areas in the recent past. There is also localized flooding in the area caused by debris in drainage systems or undersized drainage systems. Given the County's proximity to the coast, occasionally we will experience flooding caused by tropical storms or hurricanes such as Hugo in 1989. It is important that the citizens be prepared and do everything possible to prevent loss of life and property during a flood event.

Flood Safety

The following information is intended to help you in a flooding situation.

- Stay alert to weather conditions and forecasts for flooding or flash flooding in your area.
- Do not walk through flowing water. Currents can be deceptive and can knock you off your feet.
- Do not drive through flooded areas or around barriers. Roads and bridges may be washed out.
- Keep children away from floodwaters. Ditches, culverts and drains.
- Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. Report downed power lines to the power company.
- Turn off electrical circuits at the panel and disconnect appliances.
- Be alert for gas leaks and turn off gas. Don't smoke or use candles unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area ventilated.

Flood Insurance

Your home and its contents represent your greatest investment, but homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. Just because your home has never flooded or is not in a special flood hazard area does not mean you are safe from flooding. Because Lexington County 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. If a property is located within a special flood hazard area flood insurance is required by law to obtain federally secured financing to buy, build, or improve a structure on that property. However, even if your property is not located in a special flood hazard area you may still purchase flood insurance. Don't wait until the last minute to purchase flood insurance because there is a 30-day waiting period for most policies to go into effect.

Property Protection Measures

When building a new structure in a special flood hazard zone, the surest way to protect property and minimize damage is to build above the base flood elevation and strictly follow all Lexington County Storm water ordinance building requirements. **Pre-Firm homes** may be elevated but still below the BFE due to changing federal regulations and development upstream. In this case the best way to minimize damage is to eliminate any enclosed habitable spaces at ground level, provide watertight closures at windows and doors, remove any non-water resistant materials below base flood elevation, move any mechanical and electrical equipment below BFE to a higher location and structurally reinforce the foundation. In extreme cases **Pre-Firm homes** may be raised above the BFE in order to best protect them from flooding. Flood protection assistance and retrofitting techniques are provided by the Lexington County Floodplain Manager at 785-8121.

Natural and Beneficial Functions of a Floodplain

Lexington County's floodplains are a valuable resource for the community and serve many useful purposes when left in an undeveloped natural state. Floodplains filter, disperse and provide storage for floodwaters, which in turn minimizes future flood damage. **The undisturbed areas around the Saluda River in Saluda Shoals Park and the Congaree River Walk provide habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for residents of Lexington County.** The natural vegetation of floodplains also filters pollutants from storm water, improving local air and water quality.

Flood Hazard Maps

The FEMA publishes maps indicating flood hazard areas in the community and the degree of risk in those areas. These maps are referred to as Flood Insurance Rate Maps or Firms. Firms illustrate where SFHA are located within a community. Copies of these maps are available for viewing at the Lexington County Public Main Library and at the Lexington County Administration Building. Firms are also available for viewing online at FEMA.gov. Lexington County also maintains a GIS mapping system with a digital version of the information found on the Firms at www.lex-co.com. **Lexington County also maintains copies of elevation certificates at the County Administration Building. For questions about floodplain issues or to view elevation certificates contact Christopher Stone, County Floodplain Manager at (803) 785-8121.**

Flood Warning System

The National Weather Service along with the Lexington County Emergency Services provides flood warning and evacuation data to local radio and TV stations. The Emergency Broadcast System will interrupt scheduled programming in the event of a natural disaster to provide information and instructions to the citizens of Lexington County. Lexington County police and fire departments will provide assistance in the event of a flood. Please tune to your local radio and TV stations in the event of a flood in order to receive information on evacuations, warnings, closed roads and shelter locations.

Floodplain Development Requirement **Substantial Improvement/Damage Requirements**

FEMA identifies certain areas in Lexington County in special flood hazard zones. The County's Storm water ordinance has provisions regulating construction and other development including fill within these areas. **All development in the floodplain requires a permit. You must contact the County Floodplain Manager at 785-8121 before any development is started in a regulated floodplain. If you see development of any kind in the floodplain without a permit, please contact the County Floodplain Manager at 785-8121.** The County of Lexington requires that if the cost of reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or any combination of improvements to a building in the floodplain that equals or exceeds 50% of the buildings market value, then the building must meet the same construction requirements as a new building. Substantially damaged buildings must be brought to the same standards.

Drainage System Maintenance

The County of Lexington has an inspection and maintenance program. The Public Works Department conducts routine inspections on ditches, streams, and channels in order to eliminate obstructions to water flow. Debris of any kind in the county's drainage systems may obstruct the flow of water and cause overflow into streets, yards, and homes. It is prohibited by state ordinance to dump any debris that may impede water flow into waterways or the County's drainage system. If you witness any violations or observe any natural impedance to water flow you may contact the County Public Works Department at 785-8201.