

# RIO GRANDE, MINERAL AND HINDSDALE COUNTIES PREPAREDNESS GUIDE FLASH FLOOD AND DEBRIS FLOW



Rio Grande, Mineral and Hindsdale Counties want you to be prepared for any flooding or debris flow situations. Because of the significant damage incurred from the West Fork and Papoose Fires, **flooding is not a matter of *if*, but of *when***. We hope the information provided will help you to determine your personal flood risk and to make an emergency response plan for your household. We want you to be equipped with the tools you need to help you make the best decisions possible in an emergency, increasing your ability to survive a disaster. **THINK UP, NOT OUT!** Consider purchasing a NOAA approved weather radio to receive weather alerts.

## Preparing makes sense

Take the time to plan for how you will take care of yourself and your family during a flash flood or debris flow emergency. Debris flows and flooding can happen very quickly and you may need to take action before an “official” warning is issued!

### BY PLANNING AHEAD YOU CAN:

- ❖ Understand how a disaster may affect you and take steps to minimize those effects now. Reduce fear and anxiety by knowing what to do.
- ❖ Be self-sufficient for three to five days if first responders can't reach you immediately
- ❖ Be ready to help others and allow first responders to help those in the most immediate life-threatening situations.

## Stay Informed

- Local TV and Radio
- Monitor NOAA weather radio (162.475 MHz)
- [nws.noaa.gov/com/weathernation](https://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weathernation)
- [mobile.weather.gov](https://www.mobile.weather.gov)
- Follow the latest news on Twitter: RioGrandeNF

Listen for the latest flood watches, warnings and advisories.

- A **watch** indicates that life-threatening flooding is possible within the designated watch area.
- An **advisory** indicates that non-life-threatening flooding of drainage areas, roadways, and low-lying areas is occurring or is imminent.
- A **warning** indicates that life-threatening flash flooding or flooding has been reported or is imminent and necessary precautions should be taken at once.

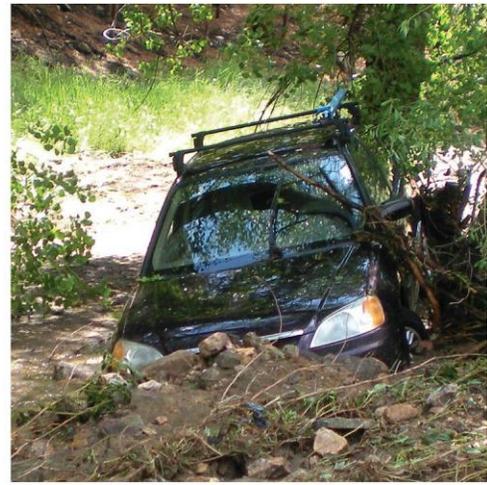


PHOTO COURTESY STEVE GLOTT, EP60 SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

### Sign up for Emergency Messages

We are requesting that all citizens go to the [SLVE911.org](http://SLVE911.org) web site click on the DELTA ALERT link in the upper right hand corner and sign up for the new EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM to receive calls to your home, business or cell phones.

---

### Consider Flood Insurance

You can buy flood insurance no matter where you live or what your flood risk, but you should not wait until the rainy/ flood season (April-Sept) to make a decision.

There is a 30-day waiting period before coverage goes into effect. By law, flood insurance is issued as a separate insurance policy through the Federal government, and can be purchased through your existing insurance company and agent.

Go to [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) for more information.

## Before a Flood

Make an emergency household and communication plan. Make sure everyone in your household knows the plan and can implement it if necessary. For more information on steps you can take to prepare your family for a disaster, see the checklist on the back page for details and resources.

- Elevate the furnace, water heater, and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, sandbags, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Protect important documents and valuables by placing in waterproof containers or in an elevated location.

---

## During a Flood

If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the local radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. *Do not wait for instructions to move.*
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you must leave your home and you have time, you should do the following:

- Secure your home. *If you have time*, bring in outdoor furniture and move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- If you have to leave your home do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can sweep you off your feet. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

# Should I Shelter-in-Place?

There are several things to consider when determining whether to move up to higher ground or shelter-in-place. **During a flood, most often the best action is to move up to an elevated location.** That can be accomplished by sheltering in place at the highest place in the home or by leaving your location to find refuge.

Determining when it is best to shelter-in-place takes into consideration factors that may be unique to your personal situation. To help determine if sheltering in place is an option for your family consider the following questions:

- Where is my location in relation to the flood areas and probable flooding pathways? If you are within a couple blocks of a flood path it may be best to seek higher ground outside the main floodway.
- Is there an upper level in my home to shelter in place or can I take shelter on the roof?
- How long will it take to reach a safe location outside my home? You may want to coordinate staying with a neighbor in an area outside the immediate flood area.
- Evaluate your risk based on distance from water pathways and your elevation; if you feel your shelter-in-place location is not safe you should move up to higher ground.

---

## Move Up!

**If sheltering in place is not a safe option, you will need to move up to higher ground immediately.**

- Go by foot to your pre-determined safe location that is away from your home. This may be a neighbor's house at a higher elevation or a few blocks outside the flood path. Determine the safest route that avoids crossing low-lying and flooded areas.
- If you are in an area where the slopes have been severely burned, the ground may be unstable. Use an alternate route if possible.
- Stay out of floodwaters. Swift-moving water and debris can be deadly and the ground underwater may be unstable.
- Stay away from power lines and electrical wires.
- Leaving the area can pose significant dangers. Road washouts and landslides can occur along escape routes. If you plan to try to leave the area, give yourself as much time as possible and be prepared with an alternative route.

# After a Flood

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Minimize cell phone usage to avoid overtaxing cell phone system for emergency responders. Communicate by texting, when possible.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to Utility Companies.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Stay out of any building surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.



# Checklist

## DETERMINE YOUR RISK

- Determine your personal flood danger and locate how close your home is to a water pathway. This will help you determine if you should shelter in place or move to higher ground during a flood. (See “Move Up” or “Shelter-in-Place”)
- Determine and prepare a shelter-in-place location and a location to go if you must seek higher ground away from your home or business.

## PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

- Build an emergency kit with supplies to last for up to 72 hours.
- Choose two locations that are at a higher elevation or outside of main water pathways, such as a neighbor’s house, and arrange to go there in a flood.
- Determine your safest route to higher ground from your home. Avoid crossing low-lying areas to reach higher ground.
- Have a household meeting to discuss and practice your emergency plan.
- Talk with employers and schools about their emergency response plan and include in your family plan.

## COMMUNICATION

- Sign up to receive free emergency alerts on home, work or cell phones, text messages and email. Go to [www.slve911.org](http://www.slve911.org) to register phone numbers.
- Download a “family communication plan” from [readycolorado.com](http://readycolorado.com). Plan how your family will stay in contact if you are separated. Identify two family meeting places: the first should be near your home at a higher elevation; the second should be outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.

## PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AND PROPERTY

- Review insurance policies before disaster strikes. Make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs. Homeowner’s insurance policies do not include flood insurance. It takes 30 days for flood insurance coverage to go into effect, so don’t delay in getting coverage! [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) or call 1.888.379.9531.
- Review life insurance policies and consider an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis.
- Make copies of important documents (bank account information, policy numbers) and keep them in a fire-safe box, secure a duplicate set in a location other than your home, and/or send another set to an out-of-town relative.

## DISCUSS HOUSEHOLD NEEDS & DISABILITIES

- Download a copy of the “household worksheet” from [readycolorado.com](http://readycolorado.com).
- Consider ways to help neighbors who may need assistance, such as the elderly or disabled.
- If you or a family member has a disability, access, or special functional need, you may need to take extra steps to protect yourself and your household in an emergency.
- Download one of the plans for “people with disabilities” from [readycolorado.com](http://readycolorado.com).
- Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters. Service animals for those who depend on them are allowed.



## Driving Flood Facts

- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. Vehicles can be quickly swept away.
- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling. If your vehicle stalls, leave it immediately and seek higher ground.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water will carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUV’s) and pick-ups.

