



# OREGON OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## Communication Toolkit: Floods

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## Introduction

The intent of the **Communication Toolkit: Floods** is to assist messaging during and after a flooding event in Oregon. This toolkit contains information on communications with the media, partners and the public. During an emergency or disaster, the need for timely and accurate information, regarding what happened and what is being done, skyrockets. This toolkit will help coordinate messages.

This toolkit contains templates and suggested talking points. **Areas highlighted in yellow are meant to be edited to your specific agency.**

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## Messages to the Public

### Key Messages

- Be aware of weather conditions in your area before driving.
- Do not walk or drive through flood waters.
- Begin clean up as soon as flood waters recede and it is safe.
- Heed the advice of emergency officials regarding evacuations.
- Have an emergency plan and kit.
- Opt into emergency notification systems.
- Donate cash (not supplies) only to official non-profits organizations.

### Expanded Messages

#### *Preparing for a flood*

- Have an emergency kit with necessary supplies for up to two weeks.
- Have a family plan with meeting places and a communications plan.
  - Designate an out-of-state contact. Local phone lines may be bogged down but a long distance call may go through.
  - Text messages may go through easier than a phone call.
- Know if you or your family live in a flood plain area and seek flood insurance if you do. Standard home insurance does not cover flood damages.
- Know the terms.
  - Flood Watch: A flood could happen, be aware.
    - This is a good time to check your emergency supplies.
  - Flood Warning: A flood is imminent or happening.

#### *During a flood*

- Turn Around, Don't Drown.
  - Six inches of moving water can knock over an adult and 12 inches can carry away a small vehicle. More than half of flood-related fatalities are caused by vehicles driven into hazardous waters.
- Move to higher ground.
- Heed evacuation instructions from emergency management officials.
- Avoid walking through flood waters.
  - Floodwaters may be contaminated with oil, gas, or raw sewage.
  - Waters may also be hiding hazards and debris.
- Heavy rains reduce drivers' visibility. When driving, turn on your lights, increase following distance, slow down, and watch for bicyclists and pedestrians. Visit ODOT's webpage for [Driving in the Rain Tips](#).
- Clear out leaves from storm drains and culverts to prevent localized [flooding](#).
- If you live in a flood-prone area, visit a self-service sandbag site.
  - Information on how to use sandbags  
[http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Portals/27/docs/emergency/NWD\\_Sandbag\\_Pamphlet.pdf](http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Portals/27/docs/emergency/NWD_Sandbag_Pamphlet.pdf)
- If you are trapped in a building
  - Go to the highest level of the building. Avoid basements and lower floors, but do not climb into a closed attics as you may become trapped by rising floodwater.

- Go onto your roof only if necessary. Signal for help.
- If you are trapped in your vehicle
  - If floodwater is blocking your evacuation route, go to a building on high ground.
  - If your vehicle is trapped in rapidly moving water, stay in the vehicle.
  - If water is rising inside the vehicle, seek refuge on the roof.
- Oregon water is extremely cold and can cause a condition called cold shock. Cold shock can cause a person's breathing and heart to shut down. Even strong swimmers have died swimming less than 100 yards in cold water.
- If you have to walk in flood waters, make sure to wear sturdy shoes. Remember that sharp objects can penetrate rubber boots. Injuries to the feet and hands are common during flood clean up.
- Be mindful of still water. Although still water may look harmless, there may be currents, which can cause falls, other injuries and even drowning.

### *After a flood*

- Once public officials determine it is safe, the public can return to their homes and begin recovering.
- After the flood, start cleaning and drying out flood-affected buildings right away.
- Begin clean up as soon as flood waters recede and it is safe. Wear proper equipment, including safety glasses and heavy work gloves, to protect yourself from injury.
- Dry out flooded areas of your home. Use fans and dehumidifiers to remove excess moisture as soon as possible. Weather permitting, open the windows and doors to ventilate the room.
- Once the house has dried out, remove mold from hard surfaces by washing with soap and water, and letting all washed surfaces dry completely. Bleach can be used following all label instructions, paying special attention to the precautionary statements and dilution rate.
- Save receipts and insurance claim information associated with clean-up and repair activities in case Federal Emergency Management Agency Individual Assistance grants become available through a presidential major disaster declaration.
- Check crawl spaces and basements for wet insulation, compromised mechanical and electrical systems, as flood damage may not be readily apparent.
- High winds may cause trees to fall or break. As you cut down branches and limbs, wear safety glasses and heavy work gloves. Remember to always cut at waist level or below. With an electric chain saw, use extreme caution to avoid electrical shock. Avoid contact with power lines.
- Never turn power on or off while standing in water. If electrical circuits and electrical equipment have gotten wet or are in or near water, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. If you must enter standing water to access the main power switch, then call an electrician to turn the power off.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Locate units outside away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors. Keep these devices at least 20 feet from doors, windows, and vents.
- For more information on cleaning your home
  - [FEMA guidance on Cleaning Flooded Buildings](#)
  - [Red Cross - Repairing Your Flooded Home](#)

- Affected building owners and renters should contact their insurance agent. Document any damage to buildings and contents with photographs. This will help insurance adjusters if/when a flood insurance claim is filed.
    - For inquiries about flood insurance visit [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov).
  - Consult with your local government Floodplain Administrator and Building Official for information and permits when considering new construction or repairs on property affected by recent flooding.
  - Obtaining building permits for homes or businesses located within the 100-year flood plain is especially important, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to ensure flood resistance design and construction, and the national flood insurance program requirements are met.
  - Verify [contractor licenses](#) from the Oregon State Building Codes Division to protect yourself from fraud.
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## Press Releases

### Templates

## MEDIA RELEASE

Date  
NR 1

MEDIA CONTACT:

*Name*

*Phone Number*

*Email*

**Title**

***Subtitle (as needed)***

**Location, Ore** – **Agency**, The current winter storms have brought heavy rains to **[area]**. The National Weather Service has issued a Flood Warning for **[affected area]**. **[River or waterway]** is expected to reach flood level at **[time]**. Residents are encouraged to exercise caution when traveling as heavy rains and flooding reduce visibility.

**[Insert Quote]**

Sandbags have been made available at [location].

**[Agency]** wants to remind everyone of the following safety tips for floods:

- Turn Around, Don't Drown. Do not attempt to drive through flooded areas. Water can be deeper than it appears and only 12 inches of moving water can carry away a small vehicle.
- Before driving use TripCheck for the latest updates on road conditions and closures.
- Avoid walking through flooded areas as floodwaters may be contaminated with oil, gas, or raw sewage. Waters may also be hiding hazards and debris.

## Samples

Press Release from Department of Geological and Mineral Industries on Dec. 16, 2015 during the 2015 Pacific Storm.

### **Be Alert for Landslides and Debris Flows During Intense Rainfall**

PORTLAND, Ore. -- With Flood Watches in effect for many areas of western Oregon and more heavy rain expected, landslides and debris flows are possible.

Track current National Weather Service flood information here: [www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/)

"Many landslides have occurred during the past week in areas across the state," says Bill Burns, engineering geologist at the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI). "With another round of rainfall, it will be very likely that we see more."

People, structures and roads located below steep slopes in canyons and near the mouths of canyons may be at serious risk. Caution should be used when traveling. According to DOGAMI, the most dangerous places include:

- Canyon bottoms, stream channels, and areas of rock and soil accumulation at the outlets of canyons
- Bases of steep hillsides
- Road cuts or other areas where slopes of hills have been excavated or over-steepened
- Places where landslides or debris flows have occurred in the past. Find places where landslides have been mapped in the Statewide Landslide Information Database (SLIDO)

at [www.oregongeology.org/slido](http://www.oregongeology.org/slido)

Learn more about landslides and debris flows and how to prepare for them

at <http://bit.ly/landslidehazards>



## Social Media Messaging

The following are suggested social media engagement tools and can be posted directly or edited to suit your agency's needs. When posting on Twitter and Facebook use the event hashtag, other commonly used hashtags or combinations.

Commonly used hashtags:

#OregonEM  
#ORwx  
#FloodSafety  
#TurnAroundDontDrown

## Videos and Multimedia

It is best to accompany social media posts with photos and videos whenever possible.

Videos:

[Turn Around Don't Drown PSA](#)  
[Flood Safety: Wireless Emergency Alerts](#)  
[Stay Afloat in Flooding](#)

Graphics:

[Flood Safety](#)

## Twitter Messages

The following messages can be posted to your agency's local twitter account. We encourage you to retweet messages from [@OregonOEM](#) and tag OEM in your tweets.

Twitter accounts to watch and retweet:

[@OregonGovBrown](#) – Oregon Governor Kate Brown  
[@NWSPortland](#) – Portland National Weather Service  
[@NWSPendleton](#) – Pendleton National Weather Service  
[@OregonDOT](#) – Oregon Department of Transportation  
[@PBOTinfo](#) – Portland Bureau of Transportation  
[@RedCrossCasc](#) – American Red Cross Cascades Region

## Scripted Tweets

Turn Around, Don't Drown. Avoid walking or driving through flood waters.

Use ODOT's Tripcheck for the latest road conditions before traveling

<http://www.tripcheck.com/Pages/RCmap.asp>

[@NWSPortland](#) issued a Flood Watch for [area] make sure your family is prepared.

<http://www.ready.gov/floods>

Heavy rains and a flood advisory this week! Do not attempt to travel across flooded roads. Find alternate routes: [www.tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com)

If you lose power, use FoodSafety.gov food charts to decide what to keep and what to toss

Don't let your business drown. Make a #FloodSafety plan today: <http://go.usa.gov/37ePQ>

## Facebook Messages

The following messages can be posted to your agency's local Facebook account. We encourage you to share posts from the [Oregon Office of Emergency Management](#) and tag OEM in your posts.

Facebook Accounts to watch and share:

[Oregon Office of Emergency Management](#)  
[US National Weather Service Portland Oregon](#)  
[US National Weather Service Pendleton Oregon](#)  
[Oregon Department of Transportation](#)  
[Portland Bureau of Transportation \(PBOT\)](#)  
[Red Cross Cascades Region](#)

## Scripted Posts

1. Turn Around, Don't Drown. Just six inches of moving water can knock down a person and 12 inches can sweep away a small vehicle. Avoid walking and driving in flooded areas. It could save your life.
2. Heavy rains can bring flooding, landslides and debris flows. Know the signs of landslides:
  - Changes in landscape such as changes in water runoff, leaning trees, or land movement
  - New cracks in plaster, tile or foundations
  - Underground utility line breaks
  - For more information on landslides, check <http://www.ready.gov/landslides-debris-flow>
3. Before heading out for your morning commute, use TripCheck to get the latest updates on weather and road conditions: <http://www.tripcheck.com/Pages/RCmap.asp>
4. Do you have a plan if your power goes out? Take time to check your emergency kit before a storm hits and check the batteries in flashlights. If you don't already have a kit here's a list of recommended items <http://www.ready.gov/kit>
5. Are you still in a Flood Warning? Get the latest weather updates from the NWS Oregon Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/US.NationalWeatherService.Portland.gov>
6. If your home was without power, your food may be at risk. Perishable foods can rapidly grow bacteria when kept at improper temperatures. Educate yourself on proper food storage and health risks of food. Use FoodSafety.gov food charts to help determine what to keep and what to toss.
7. Check out these safety tips for returning to your home after a flood:
  - Be mindful of where you are walking and driving and be on the lookout for debris. Floodwaters can erode roads and walkways.
  - Avoid standing water. It could be electrically charged from downed power lines.
  - Take photos of the damages for your insurance company.
  - For more tips and information on floods, check out <http://www.ready.gov/floods>