

# Flash Flooding and River Flooding

**Flooding and Flash Flooding are the number one weather related killer!**

Most flood deaths occur at night and when people become trapped in automobiles that stall in areas that are flooded.

**Flash floods** occur within a few minutes or hours after excessive rainfall, a dam or levee failure, or a sudden release of water held by an ice jam or mud slide. Flash floods can tear out trees and destroy buildings and bridges.

Because flash floods happen in a short period of time, generally less than six hours, they are more life threatening than general floods or river flooding. Areas most susceptible to flash flooding are mountainous streams and rivers, urban areas, low-lying areas, storm drains, and culverts. The rugged terrain of Middle and East Tennessee has potentially more flash flood problems than West Tennessee but all parts of the state are susceptible.

The National Weather Service issues a **Flood or Flash Flood Watch** when conditions are detected that can result in flash flooding within a designated area, but the occurrence is neither certain nor imminent.

Persons in the watch area are advised to check flood action plans, keep informed, and be ready to take action if a warning is issued or flooding is observed.

A **Flash Flood Warning** is issued when flash flooding has been reported or is imminent. It focuses on specific communities, streams or areas where flooding is imminent or occurring. Persons in the warned area are advised to take necessary precautions immediately.

**RIVER FLOODING:** This type of flood is caused by an increased water level in an established watercourse, such as a river, creek, or drainage ditch. River flooding is generally slower to develop than flash flooding. There can be exceptions to this, especially with some smaller rivers where the time lag between the runoff from heavy rain and the onset of flooding can be very short. This can be the case with several east Tennessee rivers and streams. On the other hand, it may take several days for a flood crest to pass downstream points on major rivers.

The National Weather Service issues **River Flood Warnings** when rivers are expected to rise above flood stage. River stages and crest forecasts are given for selected forecast points along with known flood stages for each forecast point. While there is usually more advanced warning time with river floods than with flash floods, persons should be familiar with the flood prone areas they live and work in, and must know what action to take and where to go if a flood occurs. Advance planning and preparation is essential.

## FLOOD SAFETY RULES:

- Get out of areas subject to flooding. These include dips, low spots, stream beds, drainage ditches and culverts. If caught in low areas during flooding, go to high ground immediately.
- Avoid already flooded and high velocity flow areas. A rapidly flowing stream or ditch can sweep you off your feet or even sweep your car downstream.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood conditions.
- Do not drive through flooded areas. As little as a foot of water can wash away cars. Also, the road bed may be washed away.
- If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately and seek higher ground. The rising water may engulf the vehicle and the occupants inside.
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams or washes during threatening conditions.
- When a Flash Flood WARNING is issued for your area act quickly to save yourself. You may only have seconds.
- **GO TO HIGHER GROUND - CLIMB TO SAFETY!**