



Shelby County Office of Preparedness HLS / EMA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flood Safety Awareness Week March 18 – 22, 2013



Photo Caption: The Mississippi River flooded the banks on Riverside Drive, downtown Memphis, May 2011

The Shelby County Office of Preparedness, under the direction of Bob Nations, Jr., in partnership with the National Weather Service, encourages the public to learn about the dangers of flooding during **National Flood Safety Awareness Week, March 18 – 22, 2013.**

Those of us who live in or near Memphis, known as the beautiful “city on the bluff,” take pride in the majesty of the Mississippi River, watching barges transport supplies, the fun at Mud Island, and riverboat rides. However, we have learned in recent years that a major waterway, while a favorite hometown tourist attraction, can be dangerous and deadly.

In recent years, Shelby County has experienced major flooding along the Mississippi River, its tributaries, and in the Millington area. The flooding was caused by snowmelt and a series of upper level systems in the spring, bringing excessive heavy rainfall.

For two consecutive years, in 2010, and particularly in 2011, when waters rose to 48.03 feet on May 10, 2011, the Shelby County Office of Preparedness activated the Emergency Operations Center coordinating the numerous agencies working to keep the public safe and informed. Over 1,000 households received evacuation notices on their door in the high impact areas. The rising waters forced hundreds to leave their homes and were housed by Shelby Cares for over a month until the waters had receded and alternative housing could be found.



Photo Caption: Director Bob Nations, Jr., standing, briefing emergency managers during the historic 2011 flooding in Shelby County, referred to as “the thousand year flood.”

Flood Safety Awareness Week, March 18 – 22, reminds us that flooding can happen anywhere, any time. Learn about flooding and how you can be proactive to save lives and property!

- **Flash flooding:** This number 1 weather-related killer is caused by excessive rainfall. It may develop within a few minutes - but usually less than six hours. As drainage systems fill and ditches overflow, water rushes in and floods the streets. Remember, do not drive through a flooded roadway; instead, “**turn around, don’t drown!**” As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your vehicle and twelve inches of flood waters can sweep a vehicle away.
- **Flash flood watch** means conditions are favorable.
- **Flash flood warning** means flash flooding is imminent. Be ready to seek higher ground and evacuate!

- **Major flooding:** Floods may be caused by excessive rainfall, spring thaw, melting snow, new construction, breached levees, and eroding dams. Even if your neighborhood is considered low risk, flooding can occur. Wherever there is rain, there is a risk of flooding.
- **Flood watch** means that flooding is possible in your area.
- **Flood warning** means flooding is inevitable. You should evacuate to higher ground now!

How you can prepare:

Know your risks: Visit the National Flood Insurance Program's web site at www.floodsmart.gov and find out if you are low, medium or high risk. Elevate furnaces and water heaters in your home if you live in a flood zone. Consider purchasing flood insurance for property and / or possessions since flooding is not covered under most homeowner's policies.

Get a Kit: Create a "go kit" for home, work, and auto to sustain you and your pets for at least seven days! Make sure the kit is portable and easy to move for evacuation.

Make a Plan: Know at least two roads in and out of your neighborhood and to work. Have a communications plan with your family as to where you will meet if separated. Know how to turnoff utilities before flooding starts.

Stay informed: Have a NOAA All-Hazards radio or ALERT FM with you at all times. Heed the advisories, watches and warnings. Follow all media advisories and alerts to avoid flooded areas and toxic waters.

Be a Buddy: Know who in your neighborhood may need assistance if flooding occurs. Let them know you will help them during emergency situations.

Remember, flooding can occur anywhere! Let's all prepare now!

Resources: www.staysafeshelby.us
www.floodsmart.gov
www.readyshelby.us
www.fema.org
www.weather.gov
www.weather.com