

TOP FLOOD HAZARD BASICS

For information on any of the following, call (575) 528-3131

1. The Local Flood Hazard

Due to rainfall and low-lying areas, the local flood hazard consists mainly of arroyos (such as the Alameda, Sand Hill and Las Cruces arroyos) and their "ponding" areas. Historically the City has seen significant flooding in 1927, 1955, 1972 and in 2006.

2. Flood Safety (Tips to reduce flood loss before a flood)

- Elevate valuables and appliances out of the basement or off the floor.
- Elevate the main breaker/ fuse box and utility meters.
- Buy Flood insurance before it's too late!
- Keep a flashlight, portable radio (NOAA type recommended and extra batteries handy).
- Contact the local fire department about sandbags.
- Have a first aid kit and manual available.
- Keep a supply of non-perishable food and water for emergencies.
- Have essentials such as extra medicines, cash, and credit cards available for emergencies.
- Keep emergency jacks and sturdy shoes.
- Do not try and drive or walk through flood water.
- If time permits, turn off all gas and electricity.

3. Flood Insurance

Most homeowner insurance policies do not cover flood losses. Although National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Policies are available to city residents, there is a 30-day waiting period to buy one. It is not advised to wait until monsoon season to buy a policy because it could be too late! Renters can buy contents coverage even if an owner does not insure the structure. Flood insurance is required by law in order to obtain federally secured financial backing to buy, build, or renovate a structure located in a special flood hazard area. To find out more, contact any licensed property/casualty agent or try a web site such as www.floodsmart.gov.

4. Property Protection

There are different ways to flood proof a home or structure. Flood proofing buildings can help reduce the potential for flood damages to structures and their contents. A building permit may be required for this type of work. You may consider raising your house above flood levels, or keep water away by re-grading your lot, building a small floodwall, or building a small earthen dam. In the event of a flood, your sewer could back up, so you may ask your plumber about a valve that would prevent backups from happening. If flood proofing is allowed for your type of building, it may be something worth considering. For more information go to www.fema.gov and type in "flood proofing" in the search box.

5. Natural and Beneficial Functions

Arroyos and channels convey rainfall from the base of the mountains to the river. The natural vegetation filters urban pollutants, allowing cleaner rainfall water to enter the river. Many local floodplains have been preserved for recreational activities and as wetland habitats for wildlife. Detention areas throughout the city serve as ball fields, playgrounds, and walking trails when they are not storing excess storm water. Although natural floodplains are inviting during sunny weather, they can be very dangerous during heavy rainfall. Avoid these areas when it is raining as flooding may occur.

6. Local Flood Hazard Map

In the [NFHL Viewer](#), you can use the address search or map navigation to locate an area of interest and the NFHL Print Tool to download and print a full Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) or FIRMette (a smaller, printable version of a FIRM) where modernized data exists. Technical GIS users can also utilize a series of dedicated GIS web services that allow the NFHL database to be incorporated into websites and GIS applications. For more information on available services, go to the [NFHL GIS Services User Guide](#).

7. Flood Warning System

The Flood Warning System Plan is available on the Flood Protection Web Site. The flood warning system also consists of National Weather Service warnings. The average warning time is approximately 20 minutes. These warnings are included in the following local channel's and station's broadcasts:

Full Service TV: KRWG-TV (22); FM Radio: KGRT (103.9), KHQT (103.1), KKVS (98.7), KMVR (104.9), KROL (99.5), AND KRWG (90.7); AM Radio: KOBE (1450) AND KSNM (570).

8. Floodplain Development Permit Requirements

Structures built in special flood hazard areas are required to sign an agreement permit form, build above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE: level to which flood waters will rise), and complete an elevation certificate (certifying that the structure is built above the BFE). In some cases, developers will be required to complete a flood insurance study (FIS) and/or complete FEMA's Letter of Map Change (LOMC) process, for development in the SFHA. The city's permit process is designed to ensure that all SFHA construction is as safe as possible from flooding and in compliance with Federal, State, and local SFHA development rules and regulations (City Ordinance 1933/Chapter 34 of the Las Cruces Municipal Code).

9. Substantial Improvement and Substantial Damage

All reconstruction, additions, rehabilitation or other improvements made to a structure that are valued at 50% or more of the property value must either be elevated out of the flood zone or have the applicable flood-proofing techniques applied. The same standards apply to substantially damaged buildings. All development in the SFHA (to include improvements and rehabilitations) must be reviewed by The City Floodplain Administrator to ensure that it is in compliance with City of Las Cruces design standards as well as City Ordinance 1933/Chapter 34 of the Las Cruces Municipal Code.

10. Drainage Maintenance

Drainage systems are maintained regularly to help prevent water from backing up into streets and homes. Most systems in the city divert excess storm water to Burn Lake and the Rio Grande. Unfortunately, littering and dumping yard wastes, household wastes, and automotive fluids down storm drains or in drainage channels can cause water to back up. This type of dumping is also harmful to the environment. If you spot a blocked drain, dumping of a foreign substance into a drain, or illegal development in a special flood hazard area, call 528-3131 to report it.

(UPDATED JULY 2023)