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Mayor

CITY OF WILKES-BARRE

PENNSYLVANIA



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Dear Resident:

The City of Wilkes-Barre is concerned about repetitive flooding and has an active program to help you protect yourself and your property from future flooding, but here are some things you can do:

1. Contact the City's Planning & Zoning Department (570-208-4164) and/or the City's Operations Department (570-208-4177) about the extent of past flooding in your area. Department staff can tell you about the causes of repetitive flooding, what the City is doing about it, and what would be an appropriate flood protection level. The staff can visit your property to discuss flood protection alternatives. The City is a participating community under the National Flood Insurance Program and provides a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) service with F.E.M.A. information available such as:
 1. The community number;
 2. The panel number and suffix;
 3. The date of the FIRM's index (cover panel);
 4. The appropriate FIRM zone, e.g., A, C.X, AE, A2, AO, AH, etc.
 5. The base flood elevation (depth AO and AE zones)
 6. The elevation datum used on the FIRM, if other than NGVD.
 7. Additional F.I.R.M. Data (e.g. Floodways).

The above information can be obtained for an individual property by contacting the City's Planning & Zoning Office at 570-208-4164 or wharris@wilkes-barre.pa.us A property located in a "special flood hazard area" is required to purchase flood insurance. The current Flood Insurance Rate Map can also be viewed on the City's website (www.wilkes-barre.pa.us) with the link on to "F.E.M.A. Flood Insurance Map".

2. Prepare for flooding by doing the following:

- Know how to shut off the electricity and gas to your house when a flood comes.
- Make a list of emergency numbers and identify a safe place to go.
- Make a household inventory, especially of basement contents.
- Put insurance policies, valuable papers, medicine, etc., in a safe place.
- Collect and put cleaning supplies, camera, waterproof boots, etc., in a handy place.
- Develop a disaster response plan. See the Red Cross's website at www.redcross.org for information about preparing your home and family for a disaster.
- Get a copy of *Repairing Your Flooded Home* on the Red Cross' website.

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3. Consider some permanent flood protection measures.

- Mark your fuse or breaker box to show the circuits to the floodable areas. Turning off the power to the basement before a flood can reduce property damage and save lives.
- Consider elevating your house above flood levels.
- Check your building for water entry points, such as basement windows, the basement stairwell, doors, and dryer vents. These can be protected with low walls or temporary shields.
- Install a floor drain plug, standpipe, overhead sewer, or sewer backup valve to prevent sewer backup flooding.
- More information can be found at FEMA's website, www.ready.gov/floods.
- Note that some flood protection measures may need a building permit and others may not be safe for your type of building, so be sure to talk to the Building Department.

4. Contact for information on financial assistance.

- The City's Department of Community & Economic Development (OECD) provides financial assistance to eligible property owners for non-luxury housing rehabilitation including flood proofing and/or retro-fitting against storm/sewer backup. The Department of OECD can be reached at (570) 208-4135
- Get a flood insurance policy – it will help pay for repairs after a flood and, in some cases, it will help pay the costs of elevating a substantially damaged building.

5. Get a flood insurance policy.

- Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. However, because our community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, you can purchase a separate flood insurance policy. This insurance is backed by the Federal government and is available to everyone, even properties that have been flooded. Because our community participates in the Community Rating System, you will receive a reduction in the insurance premium.
- Because your area is not mapped as a Special Flood Hazard Area, you may qualify for a lower-cost Preferred Risk Policy.
- Some people have purchased flood insurance because it was required by the bank when they got a mortgage or home improvement loan. Usually these policies just cover the building's structure and not the contents. During the kind of flooding that happens in your area, there is usually more damage to the furniture and contents than there is to the structure. Be sure you have contents coverage.
- Don't wait for the next flood to buy insurance protection. In most cases, there is a 30-day waiting period before National Flood Insurance Program coverage takes effect.
- Contact your insurance agent for more information on rates and coverage.

Wilkes-Barre City is an integral part of a countywide flood warning system coordinated by the Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency (LCEMA). LCEMA issues an emergency alert system (EAS) message to television and radio stations and also will issue a general alarm (GA) directly to the Wilkes-Barre Police Department, if necessary. Residents in flood prone areas will be warned of an actual emergency condition by the sounding of sirens from the Wilkes-Barre City Fire Department and Police Department mobile units. When these sirens are constantly sounded, it is a signal to evacuate. Residents should tune in to an emergency alert television or radio station for weather broadcasts and special local advisories.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact the Planning & Zoning Office at 570-208-4164. You may also log on to www.wilkes-barre.pa.us and click to the "Flood Protection Information" link.