



AMERICA'S
PrepareAthon!
BE SMART. TAKE PART. PREPARE.

PREPARE YOUR PEOPLE FOR FLOOD SAFETY

K-12 SCHOOLS



INTRODUCTION

Everyone has a role to play in preparing for a disaster. This day of action guide, *Prepare Your People for Flood Safety*, will help you improve the readiness of your teachers, staff, and students for a flood by moving them to take action. It provides guidance on how to hold a flood preparedness discussion and conduct a short drill as a day of action for your school or school district. Many individuals within your school can lead this effort; you may be a principal, a teacher, or someone involved in administration or facilities, or another program. Please see *A Playbook for Your Day of Action: K–12 Schools* for information and resources to make implementation easy.

America's PrepareAthon! also offers the *Prepare Your Organization for Flood Safety: K–12 Schools* day of action guide to help assess and improve your ability to maintain or re-establish operations when affected by a flood.

FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

People at risk from a flood may need to evacuate their home with little notice and be away for several days, possibly even weeks. Items left behind could become soaked with dirty floodwater and be difficult to clean or recover. After the floodwaters recede, rebuilding lives will require documentation for insurance claims and for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or other sources.

To be prepared for a flood, it's important to be ready to evacuate quickly. This means monitoring alerts and warnings information, having a family communication plan, knowing evacuation routes, and having personal items and documents in order. The *How to Prepare for a Flood* guide provides additional information on flood basics, how to protect yourself and your property, and what steps to take now.

BEFORE YOUR DAY OF ACTION

- Review the America's PrepareAthon! *How to Prepare for a Flood* guide at www.ready.gov/prepare. Also, go to www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart to find out your location's risk for flooding.
- Use the *Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings* worksheet to identify relevant local and national alert systems; and find out what your school uses to monitor severe weather.
- Establish procedures for notifying school occupants when a flood or flash flood warning is issued or whenever they need to take action to protect themselves.
- Review the *Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables* checklist or the more comprehensive Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) at www.ready.gov/financialpreparedness. The EFFAK provides templates to help collect the documentation need after a disaster to get on the road to recovery.
- Review the information at www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs and consider the needs of individuals in your school with access and functional needs.
- If you are sending mock severe weather notifications as a drill on your day of action, identify an individual to manage the drill and coordinate communications about it. Publicize the drill in advance to encourage participation, and visit www.ready.gov/prepare to download free customizable promotional materials.
- Visit www.ready.gov/kids/educators for resources that teachers can use for student activities at all grade levels.
- Add this topic to the agenda of your next PTA or other meeting with parents to talk about the ways in which the school communicates with parents in case of an emergency (e.g., listservs, emails, text messages, website).

HOLD A FLOOD PREPAREDNESS DISCUSSION

Research shows there is a strong relationship between talking about preparedness and taking action.¹ The America's PrepareAthon! flood preparedness discussion is designed as a short, structured session to emphasize the steps your teachers and staff should take to be ready.

GOALS

- Ensure teachers and staff know the basics about flooding and know how to find out their risk.
- Encourage teachers and staff to be ready to evacuate and to identify important financial and medical documents, records, and contact information they should collect and keep in a safe place.
- Ensure teachers and staff know your school's emergency communications plan and procedures.
- Encourage teachers and staff to share their experiences and talk about flood preparedness with their families, friends, and neighbors.

TIME

15–30 minutes. You can cover the basics in as little as 15 minutes. Half an hour will provide time for more discussion.

SETTING

Consider adding your flood preparedness discussion to the agenda of your next staff meeting or arranging a brown bag lunch session. Do what works best to get the conversation started.

SUGGESTED AGENDA

Use the *How to Prepare for a Flood* guide as a reference for the discussion.

1. **Flood Basics:** Remind teachers and staff that floods can happen in every U.S. state and territory. It is particularly important to be prepared if you live or work in a low-lying area near a body of water, along a coast, or downstream from a dam or levee. Flooding is one of the most common natural hazards in the United States; however, not all floods are alike. Some floods develop slowly, while others, such as a flash flood, can develop in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain. Overland flooding typically occurs when waterways such as rivers or streams overflow their banks as a result of rainwater, a levee breach, or when rainfall or snowmelt exceeds the capacity of underground pipes and drains.
 - Review past flood activity in your area and encourage everyone to find out their current flood risk profile, available at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart.
 - Make sure everyone knows not to walk or drive through moving water. Just six inches of fast-moving floodwater can knock over an adult, and only two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles. Use the reminder "Turn Around Don't Drown®."²
2. **Alerts and Warnings:** Provide teachers and staff with the *Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings* worksheet, which outlines available alerts, notifications, apps, and other resources available by location and hazard. Share which local and national alert systems your school monitors in the event of severe weather. Encourage

¹ Preparedness in America, September 2013, www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/71100.

² National Weather Service, 2012, <http://tadd.weather.gov>.

everyone to sign up for local text alerts on their phones. Also, discuss how you will receive alerts and notification if the power is out.

3. **Emergency Communications Policies and Procedures:** Provide teachers and staff with a copy of your emergency policies and procedures, including information about school closures, telecommuting, and communications. Let people know how they will be notified in an emergency (e.g., text alerts, email, public address system). As appropriate, make sure teachers and staff know your emergency hotline number, know how to access important information about work-related responsibilities during a disaster, and are signed up to receive text alerts or emails if they are available. Be sure to include and discuss the needs of individuals with access and functional needs.
4. **Flood Preparedness:** Explain that the best personal protection in a flood is to evacuate the area. This means everyone should be ready to leave the area and be away for several days, or even a week or two, on short notice. To protect property, electrical panels and utilities should be elevated.
 - Encourage teachers and staff to think about which community evacuation routes to take, how they would get in touch with their family, and what they would want to take with them.
 - Hand out the *Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables* and encourage everyone to note what documents they should collect and keep in a safe place. Refer them to the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) at www.ready.gov/financialpreparedness for more complete information about the critical personal documents they may need in the event of a disaster.
5. **Student Preparedness Activities, Lessons, and Resources:** Discuss student activities and/or lessons that can be incorporated into a curriculum on preparedness. Encourage teachers to visit www.ready.gov/kids and www.ready.gov/publications for tools and resources. Provide the link to the Family Communication Plan, www.ready.gov/kids/make-a-plan, and ask teachers to include this in their lesson plan for the day of action.
6. **Note: If you are conducting a day of action flood drill:** You may also choose to emphasize personal preparedness by conducting a flood drill. You can conduct the drill on the same day as your discussion or a few days later. Tell meeting attendees that the upcoming flood drill will include mock emergency notifications to simulate how the school will communicate with its teachers and staff in the event of a flood warning or other severe weather. Tell meeting attendees that the drill will focus on encouraging everyone to complete the *Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables* checklist as one important step to becoming prepared to evacuate. However, there are other important steps, including knowing evacuation routes, having a family communication plan, and being able to receive important alerts and warnings information.

Materials: Have copies of the *How to Prepare for a Flood* guide and *Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables* as handouts. Email or distribute the links to these as well as to the *Playbook for Individuals and Families* and *Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings* as advance reading or as followup.

CONDUCT A FLOOD DRILL

Conducting a drill with realistic emails of severe weather warnings can help people better imagine what a real severe flood situation would feel like. This kind of practice scenario can make all the difference in motivating people to take action. While being fully prepared may require additional actions, this drill is designed to encourage your teachers and staff to take one simple step now that will help them react and recover faster if a disaster happens. The flood drill will focus on the important step of getting personal documents in order as a way of encouraging more individuals to start the preparedness process. Encourage everyone to review the America's PrepareAthon! *How to Prepare for a Flood* guide for more information on flood preparedness. This drill will also provide the chance to test your communications systems and identify any necessary improvements so you'll be ready in a real emergency. Included are sample notifications and tips for a post-drill discussion. The drill and followup discussion can be conducted in less than an hour.

OPTIONAL STUDENT FLOOD ACTIVITY

On the day of action, during a scheduled lesson, ask students to complete a family communication plan (available at www.ready.gov/kids/make-a-plan), including family phone numbers, allergies, and at least one out-of-town contact. Additionally, instruct students to bring home information for their parent(s) or guardian(s) to find out their current flood risk profile and to complete the *Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables* checklist.

DRILL OVERVIEW

On the day of the drill, your drill coordinator will send a notification through your school's normal messaging channels to all drill participants about possible flooding in the area. The first notification informs participants that a flood watch is in effect. The second notification alerts participants that the National Weather Service has issued a flood warning and that a voluntary evacuation has been issued.

After sending the two notifications and allowing time for participants to complete their evacuation checklist, your drill coordinator will send an "all clear" message telling participants the drill is over. This final message reminds participants that your school conducted this drill because floods are possible in your area and that it's important to prepare.

The schedule below shows the suggested order of events for the drill.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Time	Action
9:00 a.m.	Participants receive notification that the National Weather Service has issued a flood watch for communities in the area.
1:30 p.m.	Participants receive a second notification informing them that the National Weather Service has issued a flood warning and estimates that major flooding will occur within 24 hours. The mayor has also issued a voluntary evacuation. Participants are encouraged to think about how they would stay informed and to create an evacuation checklist, including gathering important documents.
1:37 p.m.	Participants receive an "all clear" message telling them the drill is over. Participants are reminded how important it is to prepare for floods and other emergencies.

After the drill, give participants an opportunity to offer feedback about their experience. Encourage them to suggest improvements on your school's ability to communicate effectively with teachers and staff in the event of a flood or

other severe weather. Collect participant feedback through notes on individual or group discussions, electronic or paper surveys, comment cards, or suggestion boxes.

SAMPLE NOTIFICATIONS

The following are samples of notifications you might send to participants before, during, and after the flood drill. You can customize these notifications with specific details about your school and your area. These notifications can be sent by email, text, or any other means of communication you commonly use. Make sure all communications clearly convey that this is a drill and not an actual flood.

INTRODUCE AMERICA'S PREPAREATHON! TO TEACHERS AND STAFF

Suggested Timing: One week before the day of the drill

Appropriate for: Text alert, email, letter, intranet, staff meeting

Subject Line: America's [Or your school's name] PrepareAthon! for Flood Safety

To All Teachers and Staff,

On [Date], [Name of your school] will participate in America's PrepareAthon!, a national initiative to increase the number of people in America who understand the disasters that could happen in their community and take steps to increase their preparedness. Please plan to take part! It takes less than 30 minutes and could make all the difference for your safety and well-being. Please spread the word to your colleagues so they participate as well.

WHAT TO EXPECT

On [Date], [Name of school] will test our emergency notifications to teachers and staff by simulating how we will communicate with you in the event of a flood. We will remind you of school policies. This drill will help you imagine a severe flood situation, think through how you would respond, and take simple steps to improve your readiness for a flood.

GET PREPARED

Your personal preparedness is important. The America's PrepareAthon! website includes preparedness guides for different hazards, including *How to Prepare for a Flood*. Go to www.ready.gov/prepare to read more.

Thank you in advance for participating. We value your safety. If you have questions about America's PrepareAthon! and our participation in this campaign, please contact [Point of contact].

BEGIN DRILL / ANNOUNCE FLOOD WATCH

Suggested Timing: Send out or announce at 9 a.m. on the day of the drill. (*Beginning at 9 a.m. follow the sample schedule above; you may modify drill notification times to accommodate your class schedule.*) You may also consider coordinating this drill with the timing of the preparedness discussion noted above.

Appropriate for: Email, alert/notification systems

Subject Line: THIS IS A DRILL: Flood Watch in Effect

Attention Teachers and Staff,

THIS IS A DRILL.

The National Weather Service has issued a flood watch for our area. The forecast calls for additional heavy rainfall, perhaps as much as 4–6 inches during the next 72 hours.

A **flood watch** means flood conditions are **possible** within the specified area.

We will continue to monitor the weather as it evolves through **[List the monitoring services you are using, such as All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio, National Weather Service, or local radio]** and emergency notifications from officials.

Everyone should remain alert to this situation. Attached are our emergency procedures and policies, including information on office closures, telecommuting and communications, alternate class schedules and assignments and emergency operations in case the situation worsens.

ISSUE FLOOD WARNING

Suggested Timing: Send out or announce at 1:30 p.m. on the day of the drill.

Appropriate for: Email, alert/notification systems

Subject Line: THIS IS A DRILL: Flood Warning in Effect

Attention Teachers and Staff,

THIS IS A DRILL.

OFFICE CLOSING DUE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT-ISSUED VOLUNTARY EVACUATION ORDER.

At 1:15 p.m., the National Weather Service issued a flood warning for our area and estimates that major flooding will occur within 24 hours. Areas around the facility, including the parking lot and main entrance, are experiencing minor flooding. There are reports from maintenance staff of water in the lower level. The mayor has also issued a voluntary evacuation for **[Insert community]**. Additionally, the primary road used to access the facility is flooded and detoured.

A **flood warning** means flood conditions are **expected** somewhere within the specified area.

Our school will be closed tomorrow. Attached is a copy of our emergency policies and procedures. We will contact you via email and post updates to the school website to communicate updates as the situation evolves. Please prepare yourselves and your families for the coming flood, and pay attention to evacuation notifications. If you encounter floodwater, remember, “Turn Around, Don’t Drown®!” Stay informed by checking apps, local media and other resources for up-to-date weather and emergency management information.

This is a drill: Take a few minutes to imagine if this were really happening—if flooding was threatening our area right now. What steps would you need to take to be able to evacuate? Think about where your family members are. How would you get home and then leave for safety? What items would you take? What documents would you need to have if your home or belongings were ruined by the flood?

Take the next 10 minutes and use the attached *Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables* to begin your evacuation plan checklist.

END DRILL / ANNOUNCE ALL CLEAR

Suggested Timing: Send out or announce at 1:37 p.m.

Appropriate for: Email, alert/notification systems

Subject Line: THIS IS A DRILL: All Clear

Attention Teachers and Staff,

THE FLOOD DRILL IS OVER.

We conducted this drill because floods are possible in this area and it's important to prepare.

[Name of school] monitors weather conditions and will continue to inform you of changing weather conditions that could impact our area.

We hope you took a moment to think through how to evacuate safely and organize your personal documents. Please take this opportunity to talk with your family about what you would need in order to be prepared for a flood and other possible disasters. We encourage you to create a family communication and evacuation plan. Thank you for taking part!

To learn more about simple steps that will help you survive and recover from floods and other major disasters, visit www.ready.gov/prepare.

CONDUCT A POST-DRILL DISCUSSION

After your day of action, ask participants to give feedback on their experiences. It is generally best if this can occur within a week of the exercise to keep the experience fresh. Encourage participants to offer ideas for improving the school's flood preparedness. Their input is valuable for improving your school's safety. Collect participant feedback through notes from individual or group discussions, electronic or paper surveys, comment cards, or suggestion boxes.

Below is a sample script for a post-drill group discussion. If you prefer, you can also send these questions as a survey or include them on a comment card. You may also want to offer participants a way to provide anonymous feedback.

SCRIPT FOR POST-DRILL GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the list of questions below to get the discussion started. Make sure everyone gets the chance to provide feedback.

It is important to pay attention to the emotional reactions of participants during the discussion. If you notice anyone expressing discomfort or anxiety, adjust the conversation to minimize the participant's discomfort. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Disaster Technical Assistance Center provides a host of materials for use when discussing disasters. These materials are available at www.samhsa.gov/dtac.

FACILITATOR: Thank you for your participation in our America's PrepareAthon! day of action to be better prepared for possible disasters. I want to take a few minutes to talk about the drill and what we learned, as well as what we can do for the future. Your comments and feedback may be shared with administration as we continue to improve our ability to prepare for floods.

1. What did you think of the drill?
2. What did you learn?
3. What are some of the strengths or weaknesses regarding how we communicated with you about the drill and the information we provided?
4. What are some things that surprised you as you thought through how your family would evacuate? Was transportation a concern? Were your personal documents stored somewhere safe?

5. In a real disaster, would you be able to get in touch with your family? Do you know the emergency plans and policies of your children's school(s)?
6. What are some things you plan to do over the next couple of weeks to make yourself and your family better prepared to act if you need to evacuate?
7. What are some next steps we should take as a school to improve our preparedness?

FACILITATOR: Does anyone have anything else they would like to add before we conclude? I want to thank each of you for participating in this drill today. We are committed to your safety and will provide updates on any changes we make to our communications or policies as a result of today's drill or other preparedness planning.

And again, we encourage you to take an important step toward personal preparedness by gathering your important financial and medical documents and storing them safely. Access to these documents will be critical if anything were to happen to your home or family. There are other simple steps that you can take to prepare for a flood. Please go to www.ready.gov/prepare for more information. We also encourage everyone to talk about flood preparedness with your families, friends, and neighbors. Thank you.