

Flood Fact Sheet and Information for the Public in Essex

Introduction

All local authorities in Essex have a responsibility to plan for, respond to and aid the recovery of their communities, as well as supporting the emergency services in a major emergency. There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each of the many organisations who would respond to a variety of differing types of emergencies and this includes all types of flooding.

During the winter of 2013/14 severe weather events affected a wide area of the country which stretched the resources of all those involved, the scenes on television of the devastation and distress caused by the flooding cannot be underestimated. Although Essex has suffered some significant flooding during the freak weather in August 2013, the Surge Tide Coastal event in December, and more recently the flooding to the north west of the county, it hasn't seen the extent to which the Thames Valley and the South West have seen over such a protracted time. However, it is fully understood that communities are feeling nervous and anxious about how they can protect their families and property, and who will be able to assist them.

This fact sheet has been developed to provide clarity and reassurance to the public, regarding what is in place to support communities. The aim of this fact sheet therefore is to help the communities in Essex understand who may help when flooding occurs.



FLOOD ALERT



FLOOD WARNING



SEVERE FLOOD WARNING



The District/Borough/City and Unitary councils

A key role for the Authority will be the provision of arrangements for alternative accommodation, whether short or long term. This starts with the opening and running of Rest Centres, but also Information Centres, and supporting Police in Family & Friends/Survivor Reception Centres; all of these Centres are collectively known as “Emergency Assistance Centres”. In an emergency situation the relevant Authority will take account of those affected including the needs of vulnerable groups within the affected community. It should be remembered that anyone can be vulnerable in times of emergency depending on where, when and what type of emergency has occurred. These local Authorities will co-ordinate their response operations from an Emergency Response Centre located within their area.

Essex County Council

The County Emergency Response Centre would be opened at County Hall, Chelmsford, or an alternative suitable location depending on the area of the County affected, to enable the effective co-ordination of action between all ECC services involved. A request for any County Council Services should initially be through the Head of Essex Civil Protection and Emergency Management (the Chief Fire Officer for Essex County Fire & Rescue Service) via Essex Civil Protection & Emergency Management. In a major emergency where more than one District/ Borough/Unitary/City Council is involved, if requested to and agreed by the local authorities involved, the ECC Chief Executive may assume responsibility for the co-ordination of Local Authority services.

Social Care in an Emergency – County and Unitary Councils

The Social Care services of the County and Unitary Councils in Essex have a responsibility for the general welfare of persons involved in an emergency. Suitable premises have been identified throughout the Districts/ Boroughs/Unitary/City Authorities, which could be used as Emergency Accommodation Centres where shelter and sustenance could be provided for persons affected by an emergency. The organisation of setting up, equipping and staffing of Emergency Accommodation Centres will be undertaken by District/Borough/ Unitary and City Authority staff, NHS Mid Essex staff and Voluntary Aid Societies, in liaison with the Social Care Services. Overall responsibility for the Emergency Accommodation Centres remains with the District/Borough/ Unitary/City Authorities.

Highways – Highways Agency, County and Unitary Councils

Depending on the road network affected, the Highways Agency and the County and Unitary Councils Highways Services have the responsibility to maintain the highway network and co-ordinate additional signage, road closures and diversions in liaison with Essex Police.

Lead Local Flood Authority – County and Unitary Councils

Lead Local Flood Authorities are responsible for managing ‘local’ flood risk from:

- **Groundwater flooding** - caused when heavy or prolonged rainfall makes the groundwater table rise above its normal level
- **Surface water (rainfall) runoff** - flows from, or over, surfaces including open land, roofs and patios that cannot always easily absorb water
- **Ordinary watercourses (streams, ditches and pipes)** - typically smaller channels through which water flows and may flood during or after heavy rain

ECC, Southend and Thurrock may be able to investigate the cause of the flooding and where possible recommend solutions. Each LLFA has its own criteria for carrying out an investigation.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is responsible for managing flood risk from main rivers and the sea. This type of flooding should be reported to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60. To listen to recorded flood warning information for your area or speak to someone for advice, call 0345 988 1188

- You can find out if you are at risk from river or coastal flooding from the Environment Agency, long before any flood incident occurs, enabling you time to prepare.
- If you are at risk, then you can register on the free EA Floodline Warning Direct Service for receipt of River and Coastal Flood Warnings direct to your landline, mobile by voice and/or SMS, email. – call 0345 988 1188 or visit www.gov.uk/environment-agency

The Environment Agency has limited supplies of sandbags which are retained for emergency use to bolster flood defences or key installations such as pumping stations. They do not provide sandbags to protect individual private property. Sandbags can be an inefficient way of keeping water out if used incorrectly or if the problem is with groundwater. There are many other things you can do to prepare your property for flooding: visit the website for more information on: <https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood> e.g. fitting air brick covers, buying flood proof doors and windows and installing non-return valves on water inlet and outlet pipes.

Water Companies – Anglian Water & Thames Water

Water companies are responsible for the management of the sewer system, including removal of foul water surface water sewers and water treatment facilities. During any flooding incident involvement of the water companies is vital in the response and co-ordination to the incident.



Police

The Police are responsible for co-ordinating all activities at the scene of a major disaster/incident. In the case of a flooding incident while the Senior Fire Officer present would remain in command of the fire service activities, the Police would retain overall responsibility for co-ordination of activities but in close liaison with the Senior Fire Officer and Ambulance Officer. A Forward Control Point (FCP) may be set up, at which each of the emergency services in attendance would be represented to ensure the most effective deployment of resources. A District/Boroughs/Unitary/City Authorities Emergency Liaison Officer may be asked to attend the FCP.

Fire Service

The Fire Service is usually the principal rescue service at the scene of a major incident. Fire appliances are staffed by both full-time personnel and local retained crews with access to a wide range of specialist fire fighting, pumping and rescue equipment. Responsibilities, where there is life risk, include: rescue of trapped persons, control of fires, assistance in evacuation procedures, and pumping out flooded properties. Under the Urban Search and Resources arrangements Essex County Fire and Rescue Service have access to specialist flood rescue equipment and trained officers.

National Statement to Flood affected Communities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-floods-2014-government-response>



Frequently Asked Questions

Who is responsible for what – the owner of the property?

The above sections have highlighted the responsibilities of the responding organisations, however the owner of a property is responsible for protecting their own property against flooding. If you are a tenant it will be your landlord who has this responsibility.

How do I report flooding on a Highway?

Essex County Council and Unitary Authorities Highways Departments have the responsibility to ensure that the roads in the county are kept free from flood water as far as reasonably practicable

Flooding caused by overflowing drains or gullies within the highway network managed by Essex County Council should be reported to your local area highways office.

- Highways Agency 0300 1235000
- Essex County Council Highways 0845 603 7631
- Southend on Sea Borough Council, Parking, Transport and Highways 01702 215003
- Thurrock Council, Highways 01375 366100

Who do I report flooding in my property to?

- Following a flooding incident if your property has been damaged by **surface water flooding**, the Lead Local Flood Authority teams at Essex County, Southend on Sea and Thurrock Councils will be able to investigate the cause of the flooding and where possible recommend solutions.

Essex County Council: 08457 430 430
Southend on Sea Borough Council: 01702 215000
Thurrock Council 01375 652 652

- Owing to the nature of surface water flooding, it's not always possible to resolve or alleviate the problem. Householders may therefore need to install property-level protection in their home or drainage systems within the grounds of their property. For more information, see the National Flood Forum.
- Ensure you report flooding of your property to your insurance provider.
- If your home is uninhabitable, liaise with your District, Borough, City or Unitary Council to find out if you're eligible for assistance in finding alternative accommodation via their Housing Services.

Frequently Asked Questions cont:

Who do you need to contact about flooding from water pipes?

Anglian Water covers most of the county, although Epping Forest, Harlow and some of Uttlesford is managed by Thames Water.

- **Anglian Water- 08457 145 145**
- **Thames Water- 0800 714 614**
- **Essex & Suffolk Water (Fresh water only) – 0800 526 337**
- **Affinity Water (Fresh water only) – 0845 782 3333**

What responsibilities do the County/Unitary/Districts/Borough and City Authorities have for sandbags?

Local councils do not have a legal obligation to store and provide the public with sandbags. If your property is susceptible to flooding you should be prepared to protect your property using a variety of flood protection products. Advice and guidance on many types of flood protection products can be found at National Flood Forum website. www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk

All Local authorities in Essex support the emergency services during an emergency situation and will provide emergency accommodation if requested for residents who may have to be evacuated to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Do sandbags work?

The Environment Agency has stated in their advice that traditionally sandbags have been used to block doorways, drains and other openings into properties as well as to weigh-down manhole covers, garden furniture and to block sink, toilet and bath drains to prevent water backing up.

- They can keep water out for short periods which can be improved by using them in conjunction with plastic sheeting.
- They can filter out some muddy sediment found in flood waters.
- They are cheap and easy to obtain.

However, sandbags are relatively ineffective when compared to purpose-designed flood protection products.

Sandbags do seep water even when well-stacked and trodden into place. As a result, the Environment Agency strongly encourage people to use purpose made flood protection products, such as flood boards, non-return valves for plumbing and air brick covers.

Frequently Asked Questions cont:

How can I prepare my home for possible flooding?

Prior to flooding events, districts/boroughs/city and unitary authorities work to engage with their communities alongside the Environment Agency. There are a number of measures householders can take to try and mitigate the effects of flooding by preparing their property in advance of predicted weather conditions which could cause flooding. Many districts/boroughs/city and unitary authorities hold events, produce documentation and publish on their websites what to do before any flood is forecast.



Who co-ordinates the emergency?

During the emergency, the police will act as the coordinating organisation, however there are many other key agencies and organisations which support this activities The blue light emergency response agencies which include Fire and Ambulance Services as well as HM Coastguard provide the immediate response and rescue role, whilst all local authorities are responsible for supporting that operation and all the affected communities by providing emergency accommodation and shelter and welfare. To support their work, all local authorities establish an operational response centre to coordinate their activities.

Frequently Asked Questions cont:

How am I supported if I have to leave my home?

District/Borough/City and Unitary authorities in Essex have extensive arrangements in place to open rest centres and reception centres to provide emergency accommodation. They will support those affected in the activation of insurance policies to arrange alternative accommodation available under the insurance cover, however for those without appropriate or adequately insurance they may help arrange accommodation under their duty for the provision of housing.

Be prepared

Please visit your local authorities or the Environment Agency website to understand what the dangers are of flooding and how you can protect your family and property if you live in flood prone or risk areas. If you do not have access to websites at home or in the library, then visit or call your local authority. Be resilient.

Prepare an Emergency Grab Bag

An Emergency Grab Bag should hold things which you think are essential if you had to leave your home / business in a hurry.

- List of prescription medicines for the family – inhalers/epi-pens
- Copy of Identity documents
- Copy of Insurance details
- Basic First aid kit
- Spare glasses/contact lenses
- Radio (battery or wind up)
- Basic toiletries
- Torch (battery or wind up)
- Notebook, pen/pencil
- Mobile phone charger
- Contact list – including phone numbers
- Spare keys for house/car
- What would be useful for you...?*

Useful Contacts:

Environment Agency 0345 9881188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Highways Services

Essex CC 0845 603 7631

www.essexhighways.org/Report-a-highways-problem.aspx

Highways Agency 0300 123 5000

ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Southend 01702 215 003

council@southend.gov.uk

Thurrock 01375 366100

highways@thurrock.gov.uk

Lead Local Flood Authorities

Essex CC 08457 430 430

flood.prevention@essex.gov.uk

Southend 01702 215005

council@southend.gov.uk

Thurrock 01375 652 652

general.enquiries@thurrock.gov.uk

Further information relating to specific areas at risk of Surface Water Flooding can be found www.flooding.gov.uk/flooding

District/Borough/City/Unitary Councils

Basildon 01268 533333

www.basildon.gov.uk

Braintree 01376 552525

www.braintree.gov.uk

Brentwood 01277 312500

www.brentwood.gov.uk

Castle Point 01268 882200

www.castlepoint.gov.uk

Chelmsford 01245 606606

www.chelmsford.gov.uk

Colchester 01206 282222

www.colchester.gov.uk

Epping Forest 01992 564000

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Harlow 01279 446655

www.harlow.gov.uk

Maldon 01261 854477

www.maldon.gov.uk

Rochford 01702 546366

www.rochford.gov.uk

Southend on Sea 01702 215000

www.southend.gov.uk

Tendring 01255 686868

www.tendringdc.gov.uk

Thurrock 01375 652652

www.thurrock.gov.uk

Uttlesford 01799 510510

www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Water Companies

Anglian Water 08457 145 145

www.anglianwater.co.uk

Thames Water 0800 714 614

www.thameswater.co.uk

Essex & Suffolk Water 0800 526 337

www.eswater.co.uk (water supply)

Affinity Water 0845 782 3333

www.affinitywater.co.uk (water supply)