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#150312-FLOODWK

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## *Flood Safety Awareness Week*

Floodwaters can be swift, powerful and deadly. To encourage individuals, families and businesses to learn more about the many ways floods can occur, the hazards associated with floods, and what they can do to save life and property, the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners will recognize March 15-21 as Flood Safety Awareness Week. Santa Rosa residents are encouraged to visit [www.santarosa.fl.gov](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov) for daily flood safety facts and tips.

According to the National Weather Service, flooding causes more damage in the United States than any other severe weather related event, an average of \$5 billion a year. Flooding is a serious concern in Florida since it can happen anywhere and at any time. Effects from flooding can be localized, impacting just a few streets, or very large, affecting multiple cities, counties and even whole states. Most flooding related deaths in the U.S. are due to people driving cars into flooded areas. Once a vehicle begins to float, the situation for its occupants becomes dangerous and often deadly.

Basic flood safety tips include:

- If flooding occurs, move to higher ground immediately.
- Do not allow children to play near high water, including storm drains or ditches. Hidden dangers often lie beneath the water.
- Flooded roads often have significant damage hidden by floodwaters. Road beds may be washed out under flood waters. Never drive through flooded roadways. Turn around, don't drown!
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams or washes, particularly when threatening weather conditions exist.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.
- Being prepared for a flood will not only help keep families safe, it also helps to minimize damage and reduces the cost of recovery. There are five simple rules to flood preparedness:

### **1. Know your risk of flooding**

Find out what flood zone you live by doing one of the following:

- Visiting [www.santarosa.fl.gov/gis](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/gis), clicking on "Start Interactive GIS Mapping System," entering your address and selecting the "flood zone" map layer.
- Contact Karen Thornhill, Floodplain Manager at [karent@santarosa.fl.gov](mailto:karent@santarosa.fl.gov) or (850) 981-7029
- Access the FEMA Map Service Center at <https://msc.fema.gov>.

### **2. Get the right insurance**

Just a few inches of water from a flood can cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage. Talk to your insurance agent to see if you need additional coverage. The National Flood Insurance Program can help protect you financially if you need flood insurance. However, many are unaware that they qualify or that affordable flood insurance is available. Businesses, homes and apartments, both owners and renters, can be insured for contents only, property only, or both. Visit [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov) for more information.

### **3. Get a kit**

Create an emergency kit for home, work and auto to include three to five days of supply of water and non-perishable food, NOAA weather radio with battery backup, tools, maps, whistle, flashlight, batteries, medical supplies, bedding, clothing, pet supplies, infant items, special needs supplies, copies of important documents (insurance, driver's license, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, tax records) in a water proof container. Visit [www.santarosa.fl.gov/emergency](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/emergency) or [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) for more information.

### **4. Make a plan**

Create an emergency flood plan with your family and co-workers. Decide where you will meet if separated. Designate one person as an out-of-state contact everyone will call. Check emergency plans already in place for family members' school and work. Make a plan for pets and livestock. Visit [www.santarosa.fl.gov/emergency](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/emergency) or [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) for more information.

### **5. Stay informed**

Anywhere it rains flash flooding and major flooding can happen- any time. Listen to weather watches and warnings with a NOAA weather radio, weather notification app for your mobile device, or your local media. Know the weather terms and what each means:

- Flood Watch- Flooding is possible in your area. Stay tuned.
- Flood Warning- Flooding is occurring or will occur soon. Be ready to evacuate.
- Flash Flood Watch- Flash flooding is possible. Be ready to seek to higher ground.
- Flash Flood Warning- Flash flooding is occurring. Seek higher ground. When driving, remember to "turn around, don't drown!"

In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.

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