

You Can't Prevent a Flood... But You Can Prevent a Disaster

**Here is information the
Douglas County Board of Commissioners
wants you to know to keep you, your loved
ones, and your property safe!**



The Local Flood Hazard in Douglas County

Douglas County is blessed with an abundance of water which we can use and enjoy; however, our streams and rivers have a history of flooding, and you should be aware of this fact: Sweetwater Creek, Anneewakee Creek, Mobley Creek, Keaton Creek, Mud Creek, Waterfall Branch, Town Branch, Hurricane Creek, Gothards Creek, Bear Creek, Dog River, and the Chattahoochee River all have defined 100-year floodplains, which means that this property is susceptible to flooding. But because you are not in a 100-year floodplain does not mean that you are safe from flooding! Sudden thunderstorms or long, gentle rains swell creeks and rivers out of their banks, and low-lying properties often quickly become small lakes. Sweetwater Creek usually floods the day after a rain event since this creek drains from Paulding and Cobb Counties before it gets to Douglas County. Almost all other creeks and streams in Douglas County, however, have some degree of flooding during a heavy rainfall. Sweetwater Creek flooded in 1982, 1990, 1992, 1995 and 2005, so this area is particularly prone to water out of its banks.

Even if you don't live near water or live on a hill and believe you're safe from floods, you may not be. Experts report that weather patterns are changing fast, and so are your chances of being flooded. In fact, last year, two out of three federally declared disasters were flood related, and 25% of all flood claims came from areas no one considered high risk.

Flood Safety

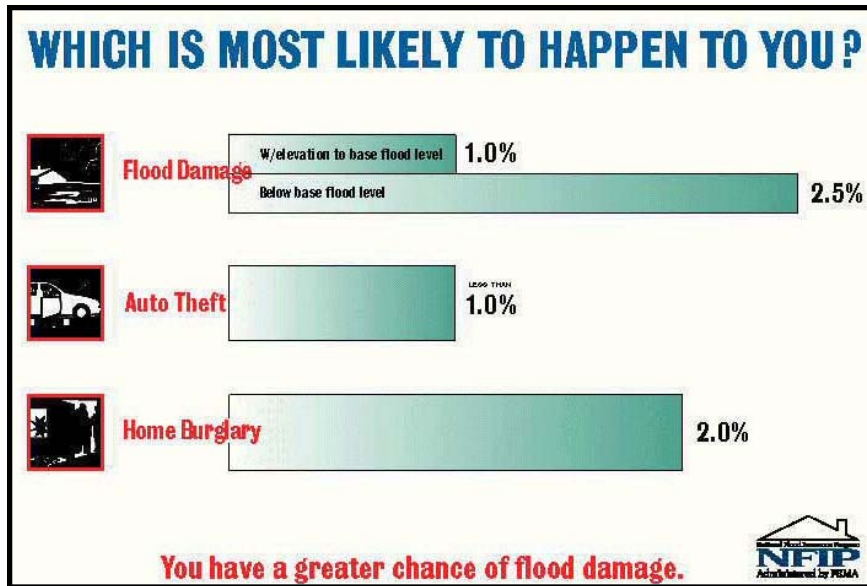
If you must leave your home or business due to rising water, remember to turn off the electricity and natural gas before you leave. If you do not know how to do this, please take time now to contact your electric and natural gas company and they will be pleased to instruct you how (GreyStone Power 770-942-6576; Georgia Power 1-888-660-5890; Georgia Natural Gas 770-850-6200).

- Do not walk through flowing water – Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths, mostly during flash floods. Water currents can be deceptive: six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still there.
- Do not drive through a flooded area – More people drown in their own car than anywhere else. Don't drive around road barricades; the road or bridge may be washed out.
- Stay away from power and electrical wires – The number two flood killer after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water.
- Look out for animals, especially snakes – Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to poke and turn things over and scare away from small animals.
- Look before you step – After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails.

Flood Insurance



Your regular homeowner's insurance usually covers your home from "falling" water (rain), but not from "rising" water (floodwaters) even though the rain may cause the flood. Only flood insurance covers floods. **Flood insurance is available to every property owner in Douglas County, regardless of your property's location because the County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).** Your local insurance agent can arrange NFIP insurance for you, and the County's Engineering Department staff can assist you and your agent in identifying your flood zones. If the property you are investigating appears to lie within a floodplain as shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), flood insurance may be a requirement if you obtain a Federally-backed mortgage on the property. It takes 30 days for flood insurance to take effect.



Property Protection Measures

If you feel that your home or business may be susceptible to flooding, you need to begin planning now to minimize flood damage. You should look for ways to retrofit your building, including, but not limited to, elevating the building; protecting it by a berm or a wall; waterproofing the foundation; adding a sump pump to the basement, etc. The Douglas County Building Permits and Inspections Department can help you with free information by calling 770-920-7444. You should also develop a plan of action in the event of flooding, such as how to move furniture to a higher room or up on blocks; where to place sandbags; when to bring inside your outside furniture, etc. You should also find a source where you can obtain sandbags and sand. Good planning will significantly reduce your flood losses. The Douglasville-Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority can help you investigate your drainage and floodwater concerns; this is a free service that is available by calling 770-949-7617. If you are concerned about the effect of drainage/flooding on your septic tank, the Douglas Board of Health can help you at 770-920-7311.

Natural and Beneficial Functions of Local Floodplains

Douglas County believes that our floodplains should be protected, and that our citizens should be protected from flooding and the fear of flooding; that is why we have development restrictions for floodplains. We also have a deep desire to protect our drinking water source, the Dog River, and restricting development in the floodplain of the streams flowing into the Dog River and our other streams allows the floodplain to act as a natural filter for siltation, stormwater runoff, agricultural operations, etc., and keep the quality of water in these basins to where they can be used for human consumption.

Maps of the Local Flood Hazard Area

The Douglas County Engineering Department has maps, prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), that show where floodplains exist on many of our waterways. These maps are available to the public during normal business hours in the Engineering Department and in the Douglas County and Lithia Springs libraries. You should be aware, however, that all streams can flood, whether or not they are identified on these maps. Douglas County restricts development within a minimum of 40 feet from all streams (unless more restrictive buffers are required) so that, if these flood, damage to nearby structures will be less likely.



The Flood Warning System

If creeks and/or rivers are predicted to rise out of their banks, this information can best be obtained by you from watching or listening to flood warnings that will be broadcast by the local government access channel (Cable Channel 23), the major Atlanta television stations (Channels 2, 5, 11, and 46), the Weather Channel (Cable Channel 31), and radio stations WSB-750 AM and WGST-640 AM and 105.7 FM. Information on flooding will be coordinated at the Douglas County Emergency Management Center, and you can also call there at 770-949-3007 for the latest information. If you must leave your home or place of business due to rising waters, the best evacuation routes are the major highways and roads in Douglas County because they have the better drainage systems and are usually built up above the floodplain level: Ga. Hwy. 6 (Thornton Road/Camp Creek Parkway), Ga. Hwy. 5 (Bill Arp Road), Ga. Hwy. 166, U. S. Hwy. 78 (Bankhead Highway), Post Road, Lee Road, and Interstate 20 are the best evacuation routes to higher ground. When planning your route to higher ground, try to avoid roadways that cross creeks, or that have deep valleys in which water can collect. If emergency shelters are set up, the Douglas County Emergency Management Center will notify television and radio stations of their locations. As much warning as possible will be broadcast before the flooding occurs.

Floodplain Development Permit Requirements

Douglas County ordinances do not allow construction of buildings in any floodplain designated on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). These maps are available for viewing in the Douglas County Engineering Department, located on the first level of the Douglas County Courthouse, 8700 Hospital Drive, Douglasville. The staff is available to help you interpret the maps. When you are considering buying property in Douglas County, please use this free service. You also may not fill in any floodplain since this will cause a change in the flow patterns of a creek or stream, and possibly cause upstream flooding. If you see construction occurring in a floodplain, please report it to the Douglas County Engineering Department at 770-920-7242.

Substantial Improvement Requirements

The NFIP requires that, if the cost of reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or other improvements to a building damaged by a flood equals or exceeds 50% of the building's market value, then the building must meet the same construction requirements as a new building. Substantially damaged buildings must also be brought up to the same standards.



Drainage System Maintenance

Because Douglas County has so many hills and valleys, there are many creeks, drainage ditches, and drainage easements. If a drainage easement is on your property, you are responsible for its maintenance. It is your responsibility to see that stormwater from property at a higher elevation can flow unobstructed through the drainage easement on your property, and it is the responsibility of the lower-lying property owners to see that stormwater from your property flows unobstructed through drainage easements located on their property. Dumping in a creek, filling in a drainage easement, or installing too small diameter pipe in a ditch can cause flooding on private property. Property owners should look over their property and remove any obstructions to stormwater free flowing from higher to lower elevations. Douglas County does not maintain drainage easements on private property, and does not “own” any drainage easements that cross private property. Douglas County does maintain ditches alongside County-maintained roadways. If you see one of these drainage ditches with an obstruction, please call the Douglas County Road Department at 770-920-4932.



Noah planned in advance; so should you!

Advance planning is the key to protecting your home, business, and loved ones from flood danger. Please take steps to “flood-proof” your home as much as possible, and consider purchasing flood insurance.

***No one is exempt from flooding;
however, good planning can minimize its damaging effects.
If you need additional information, please contact the
Douglas County Engineering Department at 770-920-7242.***



Douglas County Board of Commissioners

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