

Flooding in Launceston

Tips to protect you, your family,
pets and property.



Launceston is located at the junction of three major rivers, the South Esk, the North Esk and the Tamar. The South Esk and North Esk Rivers drain approximately 14 percent of the whole State.

Most of early Launceston was built on a flood plain and as a result, Launceston has suffered a number of floods throughout its history, with the 1929 flood leaving 4,000 people homeless. The last major flood in Launceston occurred in 1969.

The Flood Levee Project began in the 1960s, to protect the low lying areas from property damage. At the commencement of construction, failure of the levees was common, as they had to be built on silt next to the rivers.

During a flood, any levee system may fail. Launceston is no exception and even newly constructed levees may overtop or fail. If this happens, some properties in Launceston may be significantly damaged and people's lives could be affected for an extended period.

It is vital the community is educated about flood risk, preparedness, flood warnings, evacuation and recovery.

This brochure contains the following information on how to be better prepared for flooding -

BEFORE Learn • Plan • Prepare

DURING Protect • Evacuate • Travel

AFTER Insurance • Hazards • Cleaning

In the back of this brochure is a list of items you will need to put in an Emergency Kit, and on the back page we have listed important telephone numbers you may need in such an emergency.

**Please place this brochure
in your Emergency Kit.**



What to do **BEFORE A FLOOD**

BEFORE



Learn...

Don't wait for a flood to learn what to do. Know how the Flood Warning System works.

- The Bureau of Meteorology issues a **flood watch** if flood producing rain is expected to happen in the near future.
- The Bureau issues a **flood warning** when flooding is occurring or is expected to occur.
- Trained Launceston City Council employees monitor the warnings provided by the Bureau of Meteorology and also monitor river levels to predict the possible level of flooding.
- **ABC Radio 91.7FM** is the local emergency notification station. It will provide regular advice and updates on the current situation during a flood. Local radio stations such as LAFM 89.3FM and Chilli 90.1FM also provide updates.

Flood categories

Minor Flooding

Low-lying areas can be inundated which may require the removal of stock and equipment. Some roads may need to be closed.

Moderate Flooding

The evacuation of some houses may be required. Some traffic routes may be covered and roads closed.

Major Flooding

Properties are likely to be isolated and major traffic routes likely to be closed. Evacuation of people from the flood affected areas may be required.

- If Tasmania Police and the Council consider that Invermay is at risk of major flooding and the suburb must be evacuated, **a siren will be activated**. The siren sounds similar to a traditional 'air raid' siren.



Plan and prepare...

- **Prepare an Emergency Kit** with essential items (see inside back page).
- **Plan where you will evacuate to.** (The Council will have evacuation centres set up, should you not be able to stay with family or friends.)
- **Check your insurance cover.**
 - Are you covered for flooding?
 - Does your policy replace new for old, does it have a limit on repairs?
 - Check both building and contents cover; don't underestimate the value of contents.
- **Know how to turn off your water, gas and electricity.**
 - Ask your supplier how to do this.
 - Mark taps or switches with stickers to help you remember.
- **Know who to contact and how.**
 - Agree where you will go and how to contact each other.
 - The Council has arrangements in place for you to take your pets with you to an evacuation centre.
 - Keep a list of important contacts with you.
- **Think about what you can move now.**
 - Don't wait for a flood. Move items of personal value such as photo albums, family videos and treasured items to a safe place (secured in plastic bags or waterproof containers).

BEFORE



- **Think about which items you will need to move to safety during a flood**
 - Pets (dogs need to be muzzled and you will need to put all pets on a lead or in a pet container)
 - Cars (you should never drive through floodwaters)
 - Furniture (should be placed on beds)
 - Electrical equipment (should be placed on furniture)
 - Garbage bins (should be tied and anchored)
 - Car oils, pesticides and chemicals (should be stored in plastic airtight containers in a higher location)

See the 'What to do During a Flood' section for more information.

If you have any questions or concerns in relation to possible flooding in your area, visit www.launceston.tas.gov.au or call 03 6323 3000.



Preparation and protection...

If people are asked how they would defend their property to prevent the inflow of water the initial response is sandbags. However, what is not generally understood is that sandbags are not waterproof.

Also, sandbags empty or full are not easily obtained. The State Emergency Service (SES) and the Council have limited stocks and these are usually required for public infrastructure, such as response to flood levees being overtopped or minor failures in the levees.

The main points of water inflow to properties are:

- Back flow through toilets and sink plug holes
- Through the gaps around windows and door frames
- Through air bricks

To aid in preventing water coming in these main entry points the following techniques can be used when sandbags are not available or in preference to sandbags as they can be more effective:

- Insert the plug in sinks and baths, and weigh it down with a heavy object.
- For toilets fill a plastic bag or pillow case with dirt or sand and insert it in the bowl and weigh it down.
- Manhole covers within your property boundary should also be weighed down with earth or sand filled bags or heavy objects.





- The gaps around windows and door frames can be sealed with duct tape and plastic available from most hardware stores. Duct tape and plastic well applied on a dry surface is far more effective than sandbagging.
- Similarly air bricks can be sealed, duct tape placed over, or a sheet of plastic and duct taped. Do not permanently seal your air bricks.

Well in advance of any flood, and to increase the flood resilience of your property, it is recommended you seal gaps between door frames and brick work, or the structure with silicone or approved water resilient filler.

In preparation for a flood, assess your property and its vulnerability. To increase the flood resilience of your home think about using the methods described above, and have on hand stocks of plastic, duct tape, bags filled with sand or dirt and silicone sealant. This will assist with protecting your home in the event of flooding taking place.

Ask...

Questions for the Council:

- How deep will the water get in and around my property?
- Will my home become isolated?
- Do I have to evacuate and where do I evacuate to? What is the safest evacuation route?
- What flood advice will be given by local officials in addition to that given by the Bureau of Meteorology?

The Council has produced 'Flood Plain Maps' which will tell you the areas of inundation should the levees become breached. These maps are based on previous floods and modelling work undertaken by the Council. Ask about the plans in place, warning systems and evacuation plans. This information will assist you in being prepared for flooding.



What to do
**DURING
A FLOOD**

DURING



What you can do to protect your home...

Listen to and act on the advice of the emergency services. Follow these simple steps to stay safe:

- Locate your Emergency Kit.
- Move small manageable furniture and items upstairs or to a high point in your home (e.g. ceiling space for light items).
- Place furniture on beds and then personal items on the furniture. Electrical equipment should be placed at the top.
- Secure all items that may become hazardous and cause damage if moved by floodwater, for example refrigerators and other large household items.
- If safe to do so, turn off gas, electricity and water supplies when floodwater is about to enter your home. **DO NOT touch sources of electricity when standing in floodwater.**
- Put plugs in sinks and baths. Weigh them down with a strong plastic bag filled with sand or earth.
- Place a strong plastic bag full of sand or earth in the toilet bowl to prevent sewage entering your property. Close the lid and weigh down.
- Disconnect any equipment that uses water (like washing machines and dishwashers).
- Leave all drawers, cabinet doors and room doors open. This makes sure they don't swell and stick shut.
- If possible, move any outside belongings to higher locations including car oils, pesticides and chemicals which can be very hazardous to the environment when mixed with floodwaters. These should be stored in plastic, airtight containers in a secure place away from the floodwaters.
- Cardboard boxes and newspapers, etc. should be placed in waterproof containers and moved to higher ground. If this is not done, they will disintegrate and clog drains.
- Tie and anchor outdoor garbage, recycling and wheelie bins to minimise the spread of disease.

Evacuate...

In the event of an evacuation please be aware of the following:

- Keep listening to **ABC Radio 91.7 FM**, which is the local emergency notification station for regular advice and updates. LAFM 89.3FM and Chilli 90.1FM also provide updates.
- For online updates on the current situation follow 'City of Launceston Official' on Facebook.
- Emergency personnel will door knock in the area. Mobile public address warnings may also be activated.
- For the Invermay area, a siren will be activated. The siren sounds similar to a traditional 'air raid' siren.
- Please leave your home if emergency services say so. Refusing to leave on their advice will put you, your family and those trying to help you at risk.
- Tasmanian Legislation provides Tasmania Police with the authority to evacuate people in the event of an emergency.
- Leave before floodwaters arrive. You may only have minutes to evacuate.
- Take your pets (secured with a leash or in a pet container – dogs should be muzzled) and pet food with you. Evacuation centres will have resources available for your pets.
- Lock and secure your home.
- When you evacuate, you should go to family or friends or to an evacuation centre run by the Council.
- If you evacuate and stay with friends and family, Tasmania Police may request you register your details. If so, please call Red Cross on 1800 246 850.
- Once an evacuation has been called, residents and the general public will not be able to return to the flood affected area until Tasmania Police have deemed it safe to do so. This may be for some days or months.

DURING



Travelling in flood conditions...

- The majority of flood-related deaths in Australia are a result of inexperienced people entering floodwaters either in boats, vehicles or on foot. Avoid entering floodwater on foot or by vehicle, it may be deeper or faster flowing than you think, manhole covers may have come off and floodwaters contain hidden snags and debris.
- Don't walk on the riverbanks or across bridges if possible. They may have been damaged and might even collapse.
- Don't swim in floodwater – it is usually contaminated and often contains hidden snags, strong currents and other hazards.
- Avoid wading, even in shallow water, for the above reasons.
- If you must enter shallow water, wear rubber shoes or gumboots to protect feet. Don't proceed beyond waist-depth unless absolutely necessary and only if there is no obvious current.
- Keep in contact with other people. Do things in pairs. Do not go anywhere alone.

Important! Floodwater is dangerous

- Avoid walking or driving through it
- Keep children and vulnerable people away from it
- Wash your hands thoroughly if you touch it
- Never drink floodwater in any circumstance; it may contain hazardous substances which can harm you.

Evacuation centres

Help available at evacuation centres includes:

- Temporary accommodation
- Financial assistance
- Personal support
- Refreshments and meals
- Clothing and personal needs
- Arranging contact with family and friends
- Evacuation centres are located at:
 - **University of Tasmania, Mowbray**
 - **Silverdome, Prospect**

Directional signage will be displayed at these sites.



What to do
AFTER
A FLOOD

AFTER

Insurance...

- Call your building and contents insurance company as soon as possible.
- The insurance company will confirm what repairs and replacements are needed and covered by your policy.
- Ask the insurance company how long it will be before the loss adjustor visits.
- Ask the insurance company if you are to clean your property or if they will get a company to do it for you.
- If you rent your property, contact your landlord and your contents insurance company as soon as possible.
- Photograph and video record your damaged property. List the damage to your property and belongings.
- Use a permanent ink pen to mark on the wall the maximum height of the floodwater – do this in every room affected by flooding.
- Make a note of all phone calls. Record the date, name and what was agreed.
- Keep copies of all letters, emails and faxes you send and receive. Also keep all receipts.
- Don't throw anything away until told to (except ruined food).
- If you do not have insurance, contact the Launceston City Council who will be able to provide information on hardship grants or charities that may be able to assist you.

Temporary housing

Flood repairs can take weeks or months to complete, especially when there is widespread flooding and builders are scarce. It takes time to dry out a property and some buildings have to be gutted before repair. The Department of Health and Human Services can assist with temporary accommodation if you are unable to stay with family or friends. If you are to be in a temporary property for some time, think about having your mail redirected.

Hazards on entering your home...

Wait until authorities have declared the area safe before entering a flood zone.

- Take care as there may be hidden dangers in the floodwater like sharp objects and pollution.
- Wear rubber boots (or rubber soled shoes), long pants and sleeves and rubber or leather gloves. Floodwater can contain sewage, chemicals and animal waste – wear your rubber gloves at all times when cleaning up after a flood.
- Move slowly around and carry a torch to inspect for damage. Pay particular attention to any loose floor boards, holes in the floor, protruding nails and sagging ceiling areas that may be ready to fall.
- Also keep a look out for other flood ‘victims’ such as spiders and snakes.
- Check with Aurora Energy to find out whether electricity supplies to your property have been affected and if they are safe to be turned on by you. **DO NOT touch sources of electricity when standing in floodwater. EVERY SOURCE OF ELECTRICITY CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS UNDER FLOOD CONDITIONS. DO NOT turn on any lights or appliances until a qualified electrician has checked your entire electrical distribution system.**
- If the water supply has been flooded, you must assume it is contaminated. Drink only boiled or bottled water until the normal supply has been declared safe by health authorities.



AFTER

Cleaning your property...

- When flood levels outside your property start to become lower than inside, you can begin using a pump and generator to remove water from your home. Position the generator outside in the open air as generators produce fumes that can cause harm or be fatal.
- Wash out mud, dirt and debris from your home. Start at the top or upper limit of the flooding and work downwards to the floor.
- If cleaning the house yourself, clean one room at a time and make sure you work in a well-ventilated area. Apply cleaner and give it time to work before you mop it up. After cleaning a room go over it again with a disinfectant to kill the germs and smell left by the floodwater.
- If you are drying your property naturally, keep doors and windows open as much as possible. Drying can also be assisted by the use of fans and heaters, but keep windows open and only use one heater per room (too much heat can cause timber to crack).
- Allow furniture to dry outdoors but keep it out of direct sunlight to prevent warping or fading.
- Don't rush into repairs until the timber and brickwork has had a chance to thoroughly dry (and check with your insurance company first).



- It's important to thoroughly wash and disinfect every item and part of your home that has come into contact with floodwaters because of contamination. To be on the safe side, consider all items exposed to floodwaters as contaminated.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with a disinfectant soap after handling any contaminated article.
- Use household or commercial disinfectants or sanitisers. A good disinfectant to use is a solution of a quarter of a cup of household laundry bleach to every four litres of water.
- Clean and disinfect dishwashers, washing machines and dryers with water that has been declared safe for drinking. Make sure the sewerage and stormwater lines are working before starting a dishwasher or washing machine. Hand wash crockery and cutlery in disinfectant and allow to air dry, or alternatively use a hot setting in your disinfected dishwasher.
- Any food touched by floodwater is ruined and should be thrown out (even jars, canned and bottled goods), including anything in your fridge or freezer ruined by loss of power.
- Fridges and freezers should be cleaned, disinfected and checked by a professional before use or replaced.
- Mattresses soaked with floodwater are generally damaged beyond use and should be discarded (check with your insurance company before discarding).



AFTER

- Wall to wall carpeting will be hard to dry. If you leave it on the floor it could cause wood decay, mildew and warpage of the flooring and hinder drying. However, if you remove the carpet you risk shrinkage – seek advice from a professional cleaner.
- Clean clothing by shaking, brushing or vacuuming loose dirt from the articles before washing or sending to the cleaners.
- Sanitise the washing machine occasionally after washing items contaminated by floodwater to kill bacteria on the interior surface. Pour a disinfectant into the empty machine, then complete a 15 minute cycle on a hot water setting.
- Don't let photos dry out, they will stick together. Try to get to flood damaged photos within two days to prevent mould. Place them in a tub of cold, clear water and gently separate any that are stuck together. Do not allow water from the tap to run directly on the photos, as this may further damage them. Place photos face up on a kitchen towel. Do not wipe the photograph.
- Place books on ends to dry and keep the pages apart. If books are very damp, sprinkle cornflour or talcum powder between the pages to take up the moisture, leave for several hours and then brush off. Repeat if necessary. After exposure to air for some time, pile and press them to keep the pages from crumpling. Continue the drying pressing procedure until they are dry to prevent mildew. Heat can be applied between the pages to prevent musty odours.



Cleaning your yard...

- Drain or remove standing water as soon as possible to prevent creating a breeding area for mosquitoes.
- Tip water out of barrels, old tyres and cans.
- Check gutters are clean and able to drain.
- Clean ditches and drains so they can carry stormwater away from your home.
- If you can't get rid of standing water talk to the Council's Environmental Health Department about obtaining a commercial product that kills mosquito larvae but doesn't harm other animals. Alternatively apply a thin layer of cooking oil to the water.
- Clean and disinfect the BBQ plate and wash and rinse thoroughly. Have a plumber check the gas fittings before operating.
- Dispose of paints and poisons safely.



AFTER

Some suggestions for cleaning

PRODUCT / PROBLEM
Cleaners
Disinfectants
Mildew removers
To remove mildew on wood
To remove mildew on leather or suede
To remove mildew on upholstered articles
To remove rust stains from timber
Mud on walls
Locks and hinges
White salt growth on brickwork

flood damaged property...

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

Household all purpose cleaner

Laundry soap or detergent

Commercial disinfectants

1/4 cup of laundry bleach in 4 litres of water

Commercial mildew removers

Washing soda, tri-sodium phosphate

1/4 cup of laundry bleach in 4 litres of water

4-6 tablespoons of baking soda in 5 litres of water.

Dry away from sunlight in an airy place.

Wipe with cloth wrung out of diluted household bleach. Dry away from sunlight in an airy place. When dry, rub with saddle soap. Use fine steel wool (lightly) or a suede brush on suede when dry. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat.

Sponge lightly with thick suds of soap or detergent and wipe with a clean, damp cloth. Use as little water as possible on the fabric.

Treat with bleach.

Water, detergent and a good stiff nylon or bristle brush.

Oil promptly to prevent rust.

Brush off with a bristle broom when completely dry.

AFTER

What you will need in your Emergency Kit

- Warm, waterproof clothing and a change of clothing
- Blankets/sleeping bag
- Rubber shoes and/or gumboots
- Hats, sunscreen
- Camping stove or small BBQ
- A food kit filled with foods that do not need to be refrigerated. Make sure it includes bottled water
- Baby food and baby care items (e.g. nappies, if applicable)
- Pet food (if applicable)
- A list of emergency telephone numbers (take this brochure with you)
- A first aid kit with essential medications
- Your mobile phone and charger
- A portable radio with spare batteries tuned to ABC 91.7FM
- Candles and waterproof matches
- Torch with spare batteries
- Rubber gloves
- Toiletries and toilet paper
- Alcohol wipes and anti-bacterial gel
- Children's activities such as colouring books, pens and pencils (if applicable)
- A waterproof bag for clothing and valuables
- Important papers (including insurance documents), bank books, money and credit cards
- Valuables and cherished articles (jewellery, photos, etc.)

Your Emergency Kit should be kept in a waterproof storage box. Check your Kit contents regularly and restock any out-of-date items such as batteries.

Your personalised list of emergency supplies

In the space below, take note of any specific requirements you may need to add to your Emergency Kit, e.g. medications or prescriptions.

Your personalised list of phone numbers

In the space below include telephone numbers for your doctor, insurance broker, bank and family members.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Tasmania Police

General enquiries _____ 131 444
Emergency _____ 000

State Emergency Service

General enquiries _____ 03 6777 3760
Emergency _____ 132 500

Ambulance

General enquiries _____ 1800 008 008
Emergency _____ 000

Tasmania Fire Service

General enquiries _____ 1800 000 699
Emergency _____ 000

Red Cross _____ 1800 246 850

Tas Gas _____ 1800 770 018

Aurora Energy _____ 1300 132 003

Bureau of Meteorology _____ 1300 659 216

Launceston City Council

Business hours _____ 03 6323 3000
After hours _____ 03 6323 3333

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