

# Flood Proofing Your Property

## New Buildings

Make sure your architect is aware of the flood risks on your land. Plan to spend extra on elements of the building that will mitigate flood impacts and make the building design more environmentally sustainable. Higher costs upfront could lead to much lower running costs.

Consideration also needs to be given to design features that can enhance or speed up the drying process in the event of flooding. These range from installing additional weep holes at the bottom of cavity walls (to allow water to drain out) to using low permeability lime-based paints (to allow walls to dry out more quickly) and installing periscope air vents in walls. If the risk of flooding is significant, it may be worthwhile pre-purchasing dehumidifiers and blowers to enable a swift recovery.

## Flood-protection measures for existing buildings and property

Managing the impact of flood water uses three general strategies. The first is to avoid being near the flood water at all. In existing properties this is very difficult, unless you have a building that could realistically be raised off the ground. The second strategy is to stop water coming into the building. The final is modifying the building so that if water enters it does minimal damage.

Some strategies to keep water out:

1. Install flood proof doors which have a tight seal
2. Check sliding doors for their strength and seal against flood waters.
3. Seal vents that are close to the ground (they may need to be moved higher up the building, depending on their purpose).
4. Sandbag.
5. Identify where water is likely to come from and landscape accordingly – build banks, replace hard surfaces with water permeable surfaces, build solid walls

Managing water entry into the building (this should be done in conjunction with strategies to keep water out as they may delay water ingress and give you more time to prepare the building and contents:

6. Replace floor coverings that are susceptible to water damage
7. Move electrical sockets above the potential water level
8. Have a plan and location for water sensitive contents to be moved to in case of need.
9. Store water sensitive contents above potential flood levels (ie in store rooms etc)
10. Plan for easy drying of wet floors – put cupboards on legs so there is a clear and accessible gap underneath them.
11. Have the necessary equipment for drying floors at hand – mops, pumps, blowers.

## Plan for Flood Management

### Preparation

Have an emergency kit available in an easily accessible place. Include contact numbers (staff, wardens, emergency plan volunteers, SES etc); portable radio; torch; spare batteries; first aid kit; plastic bags; rainwear; and your flood management plan.

Have supplies for emergency repairs ie tarpaulins, rope, nails, hammer, timber, sandbags, in an easily accessible place

## **Make a Flood Management Plan**

### **Who will take action?**

1. Survey your congregation to see who could be included on an emergency plan list. If you don't have people with the capacity to help, reach out to your neighbouring community (perhaps via a service organisation like Rotary, or the Scouts) to see if you can recruit volunteers.
2. Make different plans for different times depending on who is likely to be on the property, or available to help.
3. Give all volunteers the opportunity to become familiar with the property before an emergency.
4. Ensure that keys to the property/ies are available in case of emergency.
5. Give clear, measurable triggers for action – don't leave it to the opinion of volunteers
6. Plan for the breakdown of mobile phone and internet services
7. Plan for the safety of your volunteers ie decide what actions can be taken by a single person, and what can only be attempted if there are at least two adults present

### **What needs to be done?**

8. Make a list of the actions to take in the threat of a flood, for example
  - i. Putting outdoor equipment that might float and damage property into its dedicated storage or on higher ground
  - ii. Check doors and windows are closed
  - iii. Log out of and turn off electrical equipment
  - iv. Move sensitive equipment above the anticipated flood level
  - v. Isolate water, gas and electrical supplies
  - vi. Monitor property in case of damage – take appropriate action to attend to damage (including evacuation and calling emergency services)

### **What's to be done after the flood?**

9. Check roof, walls, doors and windows for any damage.
10. Assess whether the flood has caused any potential further risks – ie broken tree branches, items blown onto the site.
11. Take the planned action to dry water affected property.
12. Assess whether you will be able to use the property for the next scheduled event. Communicate alternative plans if necessary.
13. Contact the Diocesan Insurance Manager if a claim will be necessary

### **Document it all**

Your flood management documentation should include

- a copy of the flood management plan
- checklists for all the actions that are to be taken
- plans of your buildings and property showing significant locations – outdoor equipment, electrical equipment; water, gas, electrical supply points; doors and windows

Make your documentation waterproof by laminating it, and keep it in a folder that is easily accessible.