

# Managing Flood Risk in the Highlands

## A' Stiùireadh Cunnart Tuile sa Ghàidhealtachd



[www.highland.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.highland.gov.uk/flooding)



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## Property Owners

Under Common Law the main responsibility for reducing flood risk lies with the owner of the property. It is long established that a property owner should take responsibility for the safety and security of their own property. This includes taking steps to reduce the risk of flooding provided these actions do not increase the risk of flooding to other properties or risk to personal safety.

Owners can be held liable under common law if they cause flooding to their neighbours by, for example, dumping of rubbish, inadequate maintenance, building of structures or features which reduce the size of the watercourse.

Owners can help to maintain the hydraulic efficiency of a watercourse and reduce the risk of flooding by taking the following advice:

- Carry out regular maintenance to remove obstructions, such as excessive vegetation, which could cause blockages and increase the risk of flooding.

- Do not use the watercourse as a dump for garden rubbish, which may cause a blockage down stream.
- Do not reclaim land by filling in an open watercourse and piping the water without first obtaining technical advice from a professional engineer.
- Do not build any form of structure or feature which reduces the size of the watercourse.
- Allow the Council access to watercourses by maintaining an appropriate buffer strip between the banks and any buildings/ structures (typically 5-8 metres).



## The Highland Council

The Council has a general duty, under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, to exercise its flood risk related functions with a view to reducing overall flood risk, but also a duty to:

- assess waterbodies within its area from time to time and to carry out clearance and repair work on bodies of water posing a flood risk;
- prepare and publicise schedules of maintenance, clearance and repair work;
- identify and map all waterbodies within its area including SUDS (sustainable urban drainage schemes);
- assist SEPA in preparing flood risk assessments, maps and National Flood Risk Management Plans;
- lead on Local Advisory Groups (LAGs);
- prepare a local Flood Risk Management Plan to deliver locally focused measures to address flood risk; and
- maintain a register of flood protection schemes.

## Scottish Water

Scottish Water is responsible for:

- dealing with surface water from homes and properties drainage i.e. water from driveways, hard standings and the roofs of buildings that is drained to their sewers; and
- dealing with the immediate impact of flooding from sewers and contamination resulting from sewage overflow.



## SEPA

SEPA is Scotland's flood warning authority and provides:

- Floodline - **0845 988 1188** - a 24/7 public information service which also provides advanced warning of flooding for your area direct to your phone.

For live flood updates visit:

**[www.sepa.org.uk/floodupdates](http://www.sepa.org.uk/floodupdates)**

or sign up to receive warnings to your phone.

- general advice on how to prepare for and cope with flooding;
- advice to local authorities on flood prevention and flood risk for planning purposes;
- answers to public queries on potential flood risk to areas and properties.

Working in partnership with other organisations SEPA has developed Scotland's first ever Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans to focus action in the areas with the greatest risk of flooding and where the benefits of intervention can be realised.



## Major Flood Alleviation Schemes

Where the risk of flooding affects a significant number of properties the Council has powers to promote a formal flood alleviation scheme. These works are normally extensive and require adherence to certain procedural provisions. This process can take a number of years to complete and involves public consultation. Objections to the scheme may lead to a Public Inquiry.

Details of flood alleviation schemes in progress can be found in the Council's capital programme, on the website below.

[www.bit.ly/HighlandFloodSchemes](http://www.bit.ly/HighlandFloodSchemes)



Flooding is a natural process that can happen suddenly. While official bodies like The Highland Council, SEPA and the Emergency Services all play a part in giving warnings and providing assistance, the person who can do most to help is you. To find out if you currently live in an area at risk from flooding please visit [www.sepa.org.uk/flooding](http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding) or phone the Council's Flood Team on **01349 886601**.

## What can you do to be prepared?

If you live in an area that is prone to flooding, do what you can now to prepare for a flood. Don't wait until it happens, you may not have time.

- Register for SEPA's direct flood warning service: [www.sepa.org.uk/floodingsignup](http://www.sepa.org.uk/floodingsignup)
- We urge our tenants to take out home contents insurance. Our scheme can be paid with your rent by using your insurance swipe card and has a reduced rate for tenants over 55. Protect furniture and belongings from £9,000 (£6,000 for over 60s receiving state retirement benefit) up to £35,000 against fire, theft, water damage and other household risks.

[www.bit.ly/HomeContentsInsurance](http://www.bit.ly/HomeContentsInsurance)

- The Scottish Flood Forum can provide information and advice on how to protect your property and affordable insurance.  
**[www.scottishfloodforum.org](http://www.scottishfloodforum.org) 01698 839021**
- Make up a flood kit - include key personal documents, torch, battery or wind-up radio, mobile phone, rubber gloves, wellies, waterproof clothing, first aid kit and blankets.
- Keep details of your insurance policy and the emergency contact number somewhere safe.
- Make a list of useful numbers you may need, see page 14 for useful contacts.
- Store valuable or sentimental items and important documents upstairs or in a high place.
- Keep some sandbags or other purpose-made flood protection products to block doorways and airbricks - a list of manufacturers and suppliers is available through Floodline, see page 14 for number.
- Make sure you know where to turn off your gas, electricity and water. If you're not sure, ask the person who checks your meter when they next visit. Mark the tap or switch with a sticker to help you remember.
- Watch weather forecasts and listen to your local radio.

## What should you do if affected by flooding?

If you have sufficient warning move valuables and items of personal value, such as photographs, to a safe location e.g. upstairs, top of wardrobe etc.

Report any flooding, or risk of flooding, to the Council's Service Centre. The contact number is on page 14 of this booklet.

Floodwater can, in some areas become contaminated by sewage. If you come in contact with floodwater outside your home you should, as soon as possible, remove outdoor clothing particularly footwear and wash your hands thoroughly, especially before preparing food. Contact your local Council Environmental Health Office or Service Point for hygiene advice.

Turn the electricity supply off, as the water may come in contact with junction boxes under the floor. If your house is flooded do not turn electricity back on before having the wiring checked by a qualified electrician.

Contact your insurance company to notify them that your property has been affected by flooding and take their advice on what to do next. If your property

is not insured take advice from a reputable builder on the works required to repair your property.

## **What can the Council do?**

The Council have a duty to assess the risk of flooding from watercourses within their area, and to identify works necessary to reduce that risk in relevant circumstances.

However, there will be occasions when the intensity or duration of rainfall will result in the flooding of properties and infrastructure.

The Council will endeavour to make filled sandbags available for collection from suitable locations to those vulnerable to flooding during a flood event. This will normally be at Council depots. If possible Council staff will be deployed with sandbags to areas of high priority including those where there are elderly, infirm or housebound residents.

Contact the Council if you are aware that a frail or vulnerable person is affected. Contact numbers are provided on pages 14-15.

The Council works with partners in the Resilience Partnership to plan and prepare for emergencies.

For assistance during flooding:

**Floodline**                      **0845 988 1188**

Contact SEPA for more advice on flood risk and how to prepare for and react to flooding.

**[www.sepa.org.uk/flooding](http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding)**

**Scottish Water**              **0845 600 8855**

**Email:**                              **[help@scottishwater.co.uk](mailto:help@scottishwater.co.uk)**

The Highland Council

**Service Centre**              **01349 886601**

The Council can provide help to Council house tenants experiencing flooding.

**Out of Hours**                      **01349 886690**

**Emergency:**

In a real emergency (life threatening) do not hesitate to call **999**.

For advice on property protection, flood recovery and community flood groups, please contact Paul Laidlaw of the Scottish Flood Forum, email:

**[paul.laidlaw@scottishfloodforum.org](mailto:paul.laidlaw@scottishfloodforum.org)**

**[www.scottishfloodforum.org](http://www.scottishfloodforum.org)**

## **Twitter:**

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[@scottishEPA](https://twitter.com/scottishEPA)

[@SSENcommunity](https://twitter.com/SSENcommunity)

[@metofficeUK](https://twitter.com/metofficeUK)

[@scotfloodforum](https://twitter.com/scotfloodforum)



# Floodline

## 0845 988 1188

SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT  
PROTECTION AGENCY

[www.floodlinescotland.org.uk](http://www.floodlinescotland.org.uk)

