

Take Action To Avoid Damage From Floods



(NAPSA)—Flooding is considered the most common and widespread disaster event in the United States, making it also the costliest and most devastating natural disaster to our country.

The 1997 Red River Valley flood in Grand Forks North Dakota destroyed several businesses and homes, and severely crippled many others. Today, North Dakota residents like Tom and Phyllis Hofsommers know they don't have to continue to be victims to floods. The Hofsommers used to spend most of their time after a flood cleaning up water in the basement of their home. In 1999, these North Dakota residents took preventative measures, like installing window well covers to keep the rain, snow, ice and debris out of their basement. Since taking these preventative measures, the Hofsommers' basement and home has remained dry.

Nearly nine out of ten disaster events result from phenomena in which flooding is a major component. Most communities in the United States can experience some kind of flooding after spring rains, thunderstorms, or winter snow thaws. Communities particularly at risk are those located in low-lying areas or near water.

Once a flood strikes, it's too late to protect your home and belongings, but identifying potential flood hazards ahead of time can reduce the dangers of serious injury or loss of property from flood and wind damage.

The first step is to determine your risk for flooding. Start by contacting the local emergency management office, building department or the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). You can also visit your local library to

research information on disaster risks.

FEMA's *Project Impact: Building Disaster Resistant Communities* works with local communities to identify and address risks to reduce the loss of life and property from a disaster. For communities at risk of floods, residents can protect their families and homes by taking preventative actions, including:

- Elevate the main breaker or fuse box.
- Elevate heating, ventilating and cooling equipment.
- Anchor or elevate fuel tanks.
- Install backflow valves in waste lines.
- Protect your well from contamination.
- Don't finish off areas that may be flooded.
- Store important documents and photos above floodwaters.
- Securely anchor manufactured homes.
- Promptly and properly dispose of hazardous materials.
- Talk to your local officials about specific actions you can take.

It pays to take mitigation measures to lessen the damaging effects of disasters. Investing in mitigation steps now will help significantly reduce the amount of both structural and nonstructural damage to your home and financial loss from building damage should a flood or flash flood occur.

Instead of waiting for disasters to strike, FEMA's *Project Impact* encourages people, communities and businesses to take preventative measures to reduce the potentially devastating effects of a disaster. For more information about becoming disaster resistant, please visit www.fema.gov/impact.