

YOUR ESSENTIAL

Flood Guide

Information, news
and forward planning

Includes
FREE
emergency
guide



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Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk

Dear Resident



This summer, Gloucestershire experienced one of the worst emergencies this county has seen. Flooding, water shortages and power cuts touched everyone in one way or another.

Throughout the crisis and recovery, I have been so impressed by how people have pulled together. I witnessed strangers helping each other, neighbours forging new friendships, and everyone, from parish and town councils to charities and the emergency services, working together. I want to thank you all.

Gloucestershire County Council is leading the recovery, working with all six district councils as well as Police, Fire and the NHS. Everyone has been working hard to get Gloucestershire back on its feet. You've told us you need more information on dealing with floods and emergencies. That's why we've produced this guide. Please share it with your family and keep it somewhere it can be seen.

Barry Dare • Leader
Gloucestershire County Council

»» About this guide

This guide has been produced by Gloucestershire County Council in association with the district councils, Gloucestershire Highways, Fire, Police and Health. It has been sent to every resident in Gloucestershire. It describes the summer emergency of 2007 and offers practical advice about potential emergency situations we could face in the future. The information has been provided by all of the partners involved in the emergency and recovery, with sponsorship from Zurich Financial Services.

To comment on this guide, email:

floodguide@gloucestershire.gov.uk

or write to:

**Feedback, Gloucestershire County Council,
Shire Hall, Gloucester GL1 2TG**

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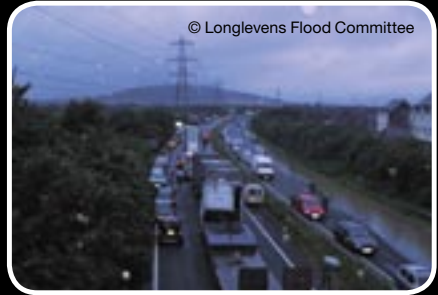
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Tewkesbury Borough: 1,831+ homes flooded



© Longlevens Flood Committee

10,000 motorists stranded on county roads



© D.Stevenson

Bourton-on-the-Water: severe flooding



© Tewkesbury Borough Council

Rescue services tested to their limits



© Cheltenham Borough Council

40 million bottles of drinking water distributed



© J. Kay

825 homes evacuated around the county

Friday 20 July 2007

Torrential rain pounds the county of Gloucestershire for over 12 hours. The county's worst natural disaster has far-reaching consequences.

What happened?

After a very dry April, the summer of 2007 was one of the wettest on record. Heavy rainfall at the end of June led to flooding in some areas in Gloucestershire, both from surface water overloading the drainage systems and very high water levels in main rivers and brooks.

But during July, rains were even heavier. On 20th July, two months' rain fell in just 14 hours resulting in two emergencies - widespread flooding and water shortages.

5,000 homes and businesses were flooded and many communities cut off. Electricity was lost to 48,000 homes for two days, and the whole county came close to having no power at all.

Over half the homes in Gloucestershire and 7,500 businesses were without any mains water for up to 12 days - and 17 days for drinking water. During the crisis, 40 million bottles of drinking water were distributed and 1,400 bowzers deployed. Around 200,000 litres of drinking water had to be delivered to hundreds of vulnerable people in their homes.



■ Mythe water treatment plant

Flooded – loss of water to 135,000 homes

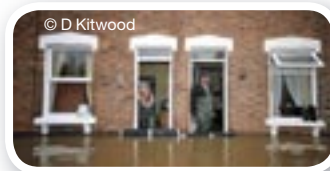


■ Castlemeads

Flooded sub-station causes loss of power to 48,000 homes

■ Gloucester City

Homes evacuated as the River Severn rises rapidly



July 2007 Properties affected by flooding

Properties flooded

1,831+ in Tewkesbury Borough
965+ in Gloucester City
623+ in Cheltenham Borough
900+ in Cotswold District
200+ in Stroud District
93+ in Forest of Dean District

Homes evacuated 825

Businesses flooded 500+
including 175 farms
84 shops
60 factories
64 leisure/tourism

■ **Tewkesbury Borough**

Flood water reached 7ft in some vulnerable areas



■ **Cheltenham**

Flash flooding caused chaos in the town centre



A snapshot of the dramatic events that affected the whole county

■ **Pitchcombe**

The A46 washed away



■ **Cirencester**

Cotswold Leisure Centre closed until early 2008



Managing the emergency and the county's recovery

Two emergencies

Gloucestershire experienced two emergencies this summer - widespread flooding and a tap water shortage affecting 350,000 people. The emergency response effort was co-ordinated by the police at Gold Command; a control centre located at Gloucestershire Police's purpose-built headquarters in Quedgeley. Led by the Chief Constable, Dr Tim Brain, Gold Command involved Police, the NHS, Fire, military, councils, water and electricity companies, and the Environment Agency, working together to co-ordinate the biggest peace-time emergency this county has ever seen.

Her Majesty the Queen sent an open letter thanking residents and rescue workers for their efforts, and the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, praised Gloucestershire's response.



Gold Command co-ordinated the emergency response effort around the county

Getting Gloucestershire going again

We know that the impact of these events will be felt for some time. On August 6th, Gloucestershire County Council took over leading the recovery process.

Since then, we've been working hard with district councils, the NHS and voluntary groups to provide financial support and practical help to people affected.

This includes:

- Carried out 5,000 door to door surveys
- Held five 'Community Voice' drop-in events for residents
- Surveyed roads, bridges and footpaths
- Started urgent repairs to flood-damaged roads, prioritising over routine maintenance
- Collected 14.5 million plastic bottles
- Opened 53 flood damaged schools on time
- Started rebuild of St David's Primary School in Moreton-in-Marsh
- Started huge task of inspecting drains and gulleys
- Started refurbishment of Cheltenham and Cirencester leisure centres

Preparing for the future

We are adamant that the lessons of this crisis must be learnt. In the past the government has recognised Gloucestershire for the way we plan for emergencies and we've now had the ultimate test. But the climate is changing and we are faced with new risks and challenges. We are already adding to our existing plans based on this summer's emergency, consulting local people and working closely with town and parish councils to prepare flood and emergency plans that suit their local areas.

We haven't got all the answers, which is why we launched an in-depth inquiry to discover exactly what happened and how we can prepare for the future. The government is also holding an inquiry looking at flooding across the country and our findings will feed into that.

Look out for Gloucestershire's scrutiny inquiry report, which will be published before Christmas.
www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/inquiry



Repairs to the county's roads will cost over £25m

Clean up costs

Recovery costs so far: £50 million

Government support so far:

- £1 million for children & families
- £2 million to help business and tourism recover
- £2.5 million in Flood Recovery Grants to six district councils
- £10 million towards rebuilding the county's roads

Support from Severn Trent

Water: £3.5 million

Support from donations and

charities: £1.2 million raised by the Gloucestershire Flood Relief Fund, including £350,000 donated to the fund by The Red Cross. Over £50,000 from the Rotary Flood Disaster Appeal.

Am I at risk of flooding?



Be prepared

Almost 11,000 properties in the county are at risk of river flooding from a 1-in-100 year event.

But even if your home is not directly at risk from flooding, this summer's crisis showed us how we can all be affected by the consequences of an unexpected event. Flash floods, usually resulting from torrential rain over a short space of time, caused much of the disruption on 20th July. Although not common, flash flooding is also difficult to predict.

ACT NOW

1 Check the risk of river flooding to your property. Visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood and type in your postcode to find out if your home is at risk.

2 Sign up to **FREE** flood alerts at Floodline 0845 988 1188.

3 Check the details of your insurance policy and add cover if necessary. The average cost of flood damage to homes is **£30,000**, so try to get cover if you can afford it.

4 Talk to your neighbours about how you could work together in the event of a future flood.



What is a 1-in-100 year flood risk?

The phrase can be confusing. Many mistakenly believe that it is a flood that occurs every 100 years. However, the phrase really means a flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any year. The July floods were in this category.



EMERGENCY GUIDE

Simple steps to prepare for flooding / loss of power / loss of water

- Make sure you have the correct insurance cover.
- Find out how to turn off your gas, electricity and water supplies.
- Keep a list of useful numbers (including your insurance telephone & policy number).
- Make an emergency kit (see overleaf).
- Think about the needs of children, babies, elderly and the disabled at home - and ensure they know what to do in an emergency.



If floods are forecast

- Listen out for severe weather warnings for flash floods on radio & TV and phone Floodline 0845 988 1188 for river floods.
- Move pets, vehicles, valuables & other sentimental items and important documents to safety.
- Prepare your supply of sandbags. Some district councils can supply sandbags, but otherwise you can purchase them from a builders' merchant. Or create your own with pillowcases or carrier bags filled with sand or soil.
- Prepare food that you can eat without cooking, clean bottled water, warm clothes.
- Charge your mobile phone.



If floods are imminent

- Alert vulnerable neighbours.
- Switch off gas, electricity and water at the mains.
- Ensure sandbags or flood boards and airbrick covers are in place.
- Plug sinks/baths or low level shower trays and weigh them down to prevent backflow.
- Store smaller electrical appliances and furniture as high as possible.
- Do as much as you can in daylight. It will be much harder at night, particularly if the electricity fails.
- In the case of flash flooding, evacuate basement flats immediately and seek higher ground.



» Staying safe in an emergency

At home

- Listen to advice given on local radio. BBC local radio has a special role to provide information in emergencies.
- Avoid electric shocks – Keep extension cables out of water and wear rubber boots.
- Avoid enclosed areas which may not be ventilated and where hazardous fumes may build (e.g. garages and cellars).
- Avoid contact with floodwater – it may be contaminated with sewage.
- Do not let children play in floodwater.
- Wash cuts and grazes and cover with a waterproof plaster.
- Avoid walking through floodwater – **six inches of fast-flowing water can knock you over.** Manhole covers may have come off and there may be other hazards you can't see.
- Don't walk along riverbanks or cross river bridges if avoidable – they may collapse in extreme situations.
- Call 999 if life is at risk.

On the road

- Avoid travel but if you must, drive slowly and cautiously. You may know your local roads very well, but a flood can alter the landscape dramatically and turn a quiet road into a potential hazard.
- Don't drive through water if you can't tell how deep it is. Around two feet of water is all it takes to float many cars.
- Aqua-planing is much more likely in flood conditions.
- Drive considerately: remember your bow-wave could flood nearby homes.
- **Don't drive down closed roads**
- 80% of flood-related deaths occur inside a vehicle. If your car stalls in the water, do not attempt to recover it - leave it and move yourself to safe ground.
- Let someone know your travel plans.





» If you have to evacuate

- Emergency services will tell you if you have to evacuate. Follow their instructions carefully.
- Remain calm and leave as quickly as possible.
- Get your family and pets together.
- Check if neighbours need help.
- Make sure fires are out and appliances are turned off.
- Shut all windows and lock doors.
- Emergency accommodation will be provided at a Rest Centre set up for you. You can arrange to stay with family or friends, or your insurance may cover the cost of alternative accommodation.
- If you decide to stay with family or friends let the Police or your council know.
- Do not return home unless you are told by authorities that it is safe to do so.
- Take your emergency kit, including prescription medicines.

» Emergency contact details

You may find it useful to complete these contact numbers which you should find in your telephone directory or online.

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Emergency Services (if life is at risk) | 999 |
| Floodline | 0845 988 1188 |
| Police (non-emergency) | 0845 090 1234 |
| Fire & Rescue (non-emergency) | 01452 753 333 |
| County council (emergency) | 08000 921 776 |
| Your district council | |
| NHS Direct | 0845 46 47 |
| Gas leaks | 0800 111 999 |
| Electricity faults | 08457 331 331 |
| Your water company | |
| Your Doctor | |
| Your Nearest Hospital | |
| Your insurance Emergency Helpline and policy number | |

After the floods

If you are unfortunate enough to be flooded, here are a few pointers for when you first get home

First tips

Clean taps and run them before use. Have power and gas supplies checked by a professional electrician or gas plumber before turning them back on. Throw away food (including freezer items if power has been off) that may be contaminated and restock your supplies.

Your insurer will arrange for a loss adjuster and other specialists to visit your home to assess the damage. They will project-manage much of the clear up, so speak to them before acting on anything.

The three-step clean-up

If possible, don't fully re-occupy your property until after the following:

1 Remove water and mud

- The Fire & Rescue Service can pump out standing water but will charge for non-emergencies. Otherwise use a pump (from hire or DIY shop), or use buckets followed by a wet/dry vacuum.
- Shovel out mud (which may be contaminated) then hose out or use a garden sprayer.

 See overleaf for safety advice

2 Clean and disinfect

- Wear protective clothes, boots and rubber gloves.
- Use a brush, soapy water and heavy duty cleaner, then rinse.
- Floodwater may be contaminated so

disinfect all areas affected after cleaning. Make sure you wash your hands with disinfectant after cleaning up. Disinfecting also avoids mildew and moulds.

3 Dry

- Take furniture, bedding and clothing outside, to avoid mould.
- Use fans plus industrial heaters and dehumidifiers.
- Have the central heating on at 22°C or above.
- Drying out can take weeks or even months. If it's done too quickly, it can cause structural damage and long-term problems.
- Good ventilation is essential - keep windows and doors open on dry days and remove any air brick covers.

» INFORMATION

Who can I speak to?

- **Insurance** Contact your company's (24 Hour) Emergency Helpline as soon as you can. If paying for help, keep receipts for any emergency pumping or repair work done. Keep photographic records of ALL flood damage.
- Your district council's **Environmental Health** department

Health and safety advice

Floodwater may be contaminated by silt, sewage, oil or chemicals. Try to avoid coming into contact with it.

Wear protective gear and wash your hands after any contact. Cover cuts with waterproof plasters.

- Don't use damp electrical items – get them checked by a professional.
- Seek medical advice if diarrhoea, fever or abdominal pain affects anyone.
- Mould can be a health hazard for babies, people with allergies and the elderly (they should stay away during the clean-up).



Beware of fumes from petrol or diesel generators or gas heaters - they can kill. Do not use indoors. Electric pumps should only run through a circuit breaker.

If you have children...

- Don't let them play in floodwater – they risk drowning and infections.
- Contaminated toys will need disinfecting.

If your garden floods...

- Don't let children or pets onto affected grass or paved areas until cleaned.
- Remove any toilet waste from affected areas by shovelling it into black bags, and sealing them. After the grass has grown and been cut once there should



© Longlevens Flood Committee

be no further risk as sunlight and soil will usually destroy harmful bacteria within a week.

Water advice

- Follow the advice of your local water company regarding the safety of the water supply.
- If in doubt, boil all water intended for drinking, brushing teeth, washing food and cooking.
- Take precautions for formula-fed infants. The preferred option is to use bowser, or bottled, water brought to a 'rolling boil' and cooled. Unboiled water should not be used.

Useful sources of information

- Health Protection Agency
www.hpa.org.uk/flooding
- NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

‘What personal help can I get?’

Coping with the aftermath

Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT) have published information to help people cope after being involved in a major incident or event, like the recent floods.

Often major events can make us feel life is unfair and unsafe. But despite our feelings and problems at the time, most people do cope and recover without long-term problems.

The leaflet, ‘Coping with the aftermath of a Major Incident:’

- Describes feelings that might be experienced immediately after the incident and in the following weeks.
- Explains what people can do to help them cope.
- Gives advice on the professional help that is available.

‘Coping with the aftermath of a Major Incident’ is available from GP surgeries, local libraries, www.glospct.nhs.uk and from the PCT offices, tel 0845 6583807.

Help in rural areas

Village Agents is a pilot project in rural Gloucestershire and covers over a hundred parishes in some of the most isolated areas of the county. Village Agents will put people in touch with organisations able to offer help or support, and will have information about local clubs and societies, pensions and benefits, social care, etc. The service is primarily for older people (50 plus), but other disadvantaged and isolated people will also be able to receive support.

To find out if there is a Village Agent for your parish, please phone the County Council’s Adult Helpdesk on **01452 426868**.

Samaritans

The Samaritans offer confidential and emotional support to those experiencing personal crises. Samaritan volunteers are trained to listen without judgement, whatever the concerns of the caller are and regardless of their race, gender, religion, ability or sexual orientation.

You can ring the Samaritans on **08457 90 90 90** every day, 24 hours a day. www.samaritans.org

These pages are kindly supported by

Gloucestershire 
Primary Care Trust

‘What financial help can I get?’

Council tax relief and benefits

If you are unable to live or work in your property, you may be able to get a discount on paying council tax or business rates. Contact your district council.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureau provide free, confidential and independent advice from over 20 offices within Gloucestershire. If you're having problems because of the flooding, an experienced adviser should be able to help answer all your questions. Advice is available face-to-face and by telephone.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Grants and funding

Grants from Gloucestershire Community Foundation are available for voluntary and community groups. Call **01452 656 385**, or visit www.gloucestershirecommunityfoundation.co.uk

Gloucestershire Flood Relief Fund

Over £1.2 million has been raised by the public and from business donations to give out as grants for households affected by the recent floods. Some of these funds may still be available. Call **01684 295 010** or visit www.glosfloodrelief.org



Insurance

Zurich Home Insurance says “Your insurance company should confirm the level of cover available to you and provide a loss adjuster and other specialists to project-manage the repair work to your home. They will return it to the condition it was in before flood damage. Remember, drying out can take weeks or even months, depending on how long the water was in the property, and how deep it was. Your insurance cover should help pay for alternative accommodation whilst the property is uninhabitable.

“Unfortunately, if you have no insurance, you won’t be covered for any damage already caused by taking out a new policy after you have been flooded. Speak to your district council or Citizens Advice Bureau to find out if any grant or alternative support is available.”

» INFORMATION

Useful sources

- **Your local or parish councillor**
Contact the county council if you're unsure who covers your area. See contact details on back cover.
- **Furniture Recycling Project**
01452 318 978
- **Fairshare Scheme**
Informal ‘neighbour helps neighbour’ scheme
01452 415 900

Distraction burglaries and cold callers

After a flood, beware of doorstep callers who may trick or steal. They may try to gain entry by asking to turn off your water or check the electricity.

- Always put the chain on when answering the door and make sure windows and other doors are locked (just in case an accomplice tries to enter elsewhere while you are talking).
- Check a caller's ID and phone the company to check they are genuine if you have any doubts.
- Call a neighbour or 999 for assistance if you are worried.

Rogue traders

If callers offer to do work, the Association of British Insurers recommend that you should:

- Beware of tradesmen who can start the next day - reputable ones are usually busy.
- Ask to be put in touch with past clients to see samples of work.
- Beware of someone who gives only a mobile phone number and no business address.

Don't pay in advance, do pay in stages and don't make the final payment until you are happy with the work.

Waste disposal

What should you do with ruined furniture or building waste if a flood has affected your home?

Some flood waste may be taken away by the normal refuse collection, but normally it will need to be loaded into skips. District councils may sometimes provide these. Otherwise contact a skip hire company (you will need a licence to put a skip on a public highway).

Waste taken to local tips will be classified as controlled waste and must be handled properly. Waste management firms can be found in the Yellow pages or on the Yell.com website. Don't throw anything away without checking with your insurer first if you are planning to claim for it – it is evidence!

▶ INFORMATION

Useful contacts

- **Gloucestershire County Council Trading Standards**
08454 04 05 06 or visit
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/glos

Flood defences for your home

If you are doing renovations or improvements, or repairing flood damage, please bear in mind the advice listed over these two pages. Many of the measures will pay for themselves after a single flood.



If floodwater is more than 1m high, you may cause more harm than good by keeping the water out. The force of the water may cause structural damage to your home.

To prevent water entering a property:

- Do regular maintenance checks outside – ensure mortar between bricks is in good condition.
- Don't just build it back; build it better.
- Always seek help before making changes. Get advice from a specialist flood surveyor from RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors).
- Flood protection products may give you more time to move your possessions off the ground floor to safety; often water is 'cleaner' because mud and silt stays outside.
- Consider the impact of any outdoor works on your neighbours e.g. hard landscaping will increase levels of water runoff.
- Look for Environment Agency kite-marked products – tested and found fit for the job.
- For more information on self-help flood products, visit the 'Blue Pages' directory available from the National Flood Forum.



Sign up for Floodline Warnings Direct

“We can't always stop rivers from flooding, but we can tell you when it's going to happen. Only 30 per cent of homes that can sign up to our free Floodline Warnings Direct service have signed up. If you're not one of them, call us now. We can send alerts via phone, mobile, text and pager.”

— Environment Agency





To reduce the cost and repair time after any future flood, you could:

- Fit plug sockets, boilers, service meters higher on walls.
- Choose water-resistant door and window frames (and use silicone sealant).
- Get a chemical damp-proof course below joist level; and install airbricks with removable covers.
- Replace mineral insulation within walls with closed cell insulation.
- Have non-return valves in drainage pipes to prevent sewage backing up into the house.
- Check access points for pipes (e.g. washing machines) for gaps and fill.
- Use waterproof sealant on external walls; waterproof paint on internal walls.

Remember to check with your insurer to see if any work you carry out will lead to lower premiums.

And if there's a choice, you can:

- Go for solid flooring (concrete covered with treated timber or sealed tiles) - more resistant than floor boards or chipboard.
- Have wood or plastic kitchen/bathroom units rather than MDF/chipboard.
- Pick lime or cement render - more water-resistant than normal plaster.
- Replace ovens with raised, built-under types.
- Choose rugs rather than fitted carpets.

» INFORMATION

Useful flood support

- **Environment Agency**
0845 988 1188 or visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk for the latest Flood Information Guides
- **National Flood Forum**
01299 403 055 or visit www.floodforum.org.uk. Set up by flood victims to help others cope with their situation and the trauma, loss and frustration that follows.
- **RICS**
020 8207 6100 or visit www.ricsfirms.com

➤ Contact details



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Gloucestershire County Council

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk
01452 425 000

District Councils



Cheltenham Borough Council

www.cheltenham.gov.uk
01242 26 26 26



Gloucester City Council

www.gloucester.gov.uk
01452 522 232



Cotswold District Council

www.cotswold.gov.uk
01285 623 000



Stroud District Council

www.stroud.gov.uk
01453 766 321



Forest of Dean District Council

www.fdean.gov.uk
01594 810 000



Tewkesbury Borough Council

www.tewkesbury.gov.uk
01684 295 010

Gloucestershire Highways

08000 514 514

Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk
08708 506 506 General Enquiries
0845 988 1188 Floodline

National Flood Forum

www.floodforum.org.uk
Tel: 01299 403 055

Association of British Insurers

www.abi.org.uk/floodinfo
020 7600 3333

Trading Standards

www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/glos

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

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0800 0151001 (ref GLOU1).
www.zurichinsurance.co.uk

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