

Central  
Bedfordshire

**great**  
communities



# Central Bedfordshire Council Flood Guide Helping you to protect your home from flooding.

**A great place to live and work.**

Find us online



[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



[www.facebook.com/letstalkcentral](https://www.facebook.com/letstalkcentral)



@letstalkcentral

## Contents

**This guide is made up of 8 main parts which will help you to know what to do in case of flooding and what steps you can take now to reduce the damage that flooding can cause.**

**What are the different ‘types’ of flooding?** Find out more about where flood water comes from and how it is categorised for the purposes of regulation.....3

**Who to contact and when** Many different public and private bodies are involved in managing flooding and it can be difficult to know who does what and when. Find out here who is best suited to help your needs.....5

**Reporting a problem** A list of telephone numbers and points of contact for use in a flood 6

**Who does what when it comes to flooding?** Here you can find the main roles and responsibilities of individuals and agencies within Central Bedfordshire who are involved with managing the risk of flooding.....7

Part 1. What is your role when it comes to flooding?.....7

Part 2. How do different services within Central Bedfordshire Council respond to flooding? .....8

Part 3. How do other organisations outside of the council respond to flooding?.....10

**Investigating drainage and flood events** Find out more on when the council will look into individual cases of flooding .....11

**Be prepared and know your risk!** If you know your property or business is in an area at risk of flooding there are a number of simple steps you can take now to prepare and stay safe later. You can also find out about our flood volunteer program.....13

**Staying safe during a flood** Make sure you know how to keep you and your family safe from flood water .....17

**Protecting your property for the future** Did you know that individuals are responsible for protecting their homes and businesses? Find out more on what options are available .....20

What are the different ‘types’ of flooding?

**Not all floods will be alike, they come from a variety of sources and will behave differently depending on the conditions in which they arise. Each type of flood requires its own type of response...**

Where's the water coming from?	Why does it happen?	Who's the Lead Authority?
<p><b>Surface water</b></p> 	<p>Caused when rainwater can't drain away into natural or man-made systems, instead it collects on the surface in pools or flows over the ground.</p> <p>It is more difficult to predict surface water flooding, compared to other types of flooding, and it will usually occur rapidly but be relatively short lived.</p>	<p>Your <b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council)</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 0300 300 8000 Office hours / 0300 300 8098 Out of office hours</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b>  <a href="mailto:floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a>  <b>(not to be used in an emergency – in an emergency call 999)</b></p> <p><b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/">www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>Main River</b></p> 	<p>This will occur when the level of water in a main river overtops its banks or flood defenses, usually caused by long or heavy periods of rain. Also known as 'fluvial flooding', it is generally infrequent and can be predicted to some extent.</p> <p>In central Bedfordshire this includes: The River Hiz, The River Ivel, The River Flit, The Clipstone Brook and The River Ouzel.</p>	<p><b>The Environment Agency</b>  <b>Telephone:</b> 08708 506 506</p> <p><b>e-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>web:</b> <a href="http://www.gov.uk/browse/environment-countryside/flooding-extreme-weather">www.gov.uk/browse/environment-countryside/flooding-extreme-weather</a></p>
<p><b>Ordinary watercourses</b></p> 	<p>These are all watercourses that aren't labelled as 'main rivers' by the Environment Agency. They often include smaller channels like streams, ditches and brooks and can be above or below ground (e.g. in piped 'culverts').</p>	<p>Your <b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council) has strategic responsibility. See <a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood">www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood</a></p> <p><b>The Bedford Group of IDBs</b> also control some watercourses see below for details.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p><b>Riparian owners</b> are responsible for making sure watercourses are working effectively.</p>
<p><b>Ground water</b></p> 	<p>Occurs when water levels in the ground rise above the land surface. It is most likely in areas underlain by permeable rocks such as chalk or sandstone, called 'aquifers'. This type of flooding can last for weeks or months.</p>	<p>Your <b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council). See below for contact details.</p>

### The public highway



When water pools within the boundaries of the public highway it is considered as 'highway flooding'. This might happen when drains become blocked.

Highways authorities provide and manage highway drainage to keep the roads safe. They are responsible for managing surface water flood risk on roads through maintenance of the highway drainage system.

**Highways Authority** (Central Bedfordshire Council)

**Telephone:** 0300 300 8049 (24 hours)

**Online:** <http://www.cb-report-it.co.uk/index.aspx>

**Web:** <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk>

OR

The **Highways England** for motorways and trunk roads

### Sewers and drains



This can happen when sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or when they become blocked, causing them to surcharge. The chance of sewer flooding will depend on the capacity of the local sewerage system and the amount of rain that falls.

In urban areas, surface water flooding and sewer flooding often combine, polluting the floodwater.

For public sewers the local water and sewerage undertakers are responsible for managing the flood risk from public sewers. These are:

**Anglian Water:**

**Telephone:** 08457 145 145

**Web:** [www.anglianwater.co.uk/](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/)

**Thames water**

**Telephone:** 0845 9200 800

**Web:** [www.thameswater.co.uk/](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/)

OR

**Individuals** are responsible for private sewers and drains within their property boundaries.

### Water mains



Water pipes can become corroded with age or damaged due to ground movement.

This type of flooding is not related to rainfall but can cause localised disruption to transport and damage to buildings, particularly properties with a basement.

**Thames Water**  
**As above**

**Anglian Water**  
**As above**

**Affinity Water**

**Telephone:** 0845 7823333 (24-hrs)

**Web:** [www.affinitywater.co.uk](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk)

### Large raised reservoirs



Large raised reservoirs hold large volumes of water above ground level which is contained by walls or 'dams', where damage occurs to these flooding may occur. These types of reservoirs must be registered with the Environment Agency.

Land owners have responsibility for smaller reservoirs and managing their risk to others.

**The Environment Agency**

**Telephone:** 08708 506 506

**e-mail:** [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

**web:** [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood)

OR

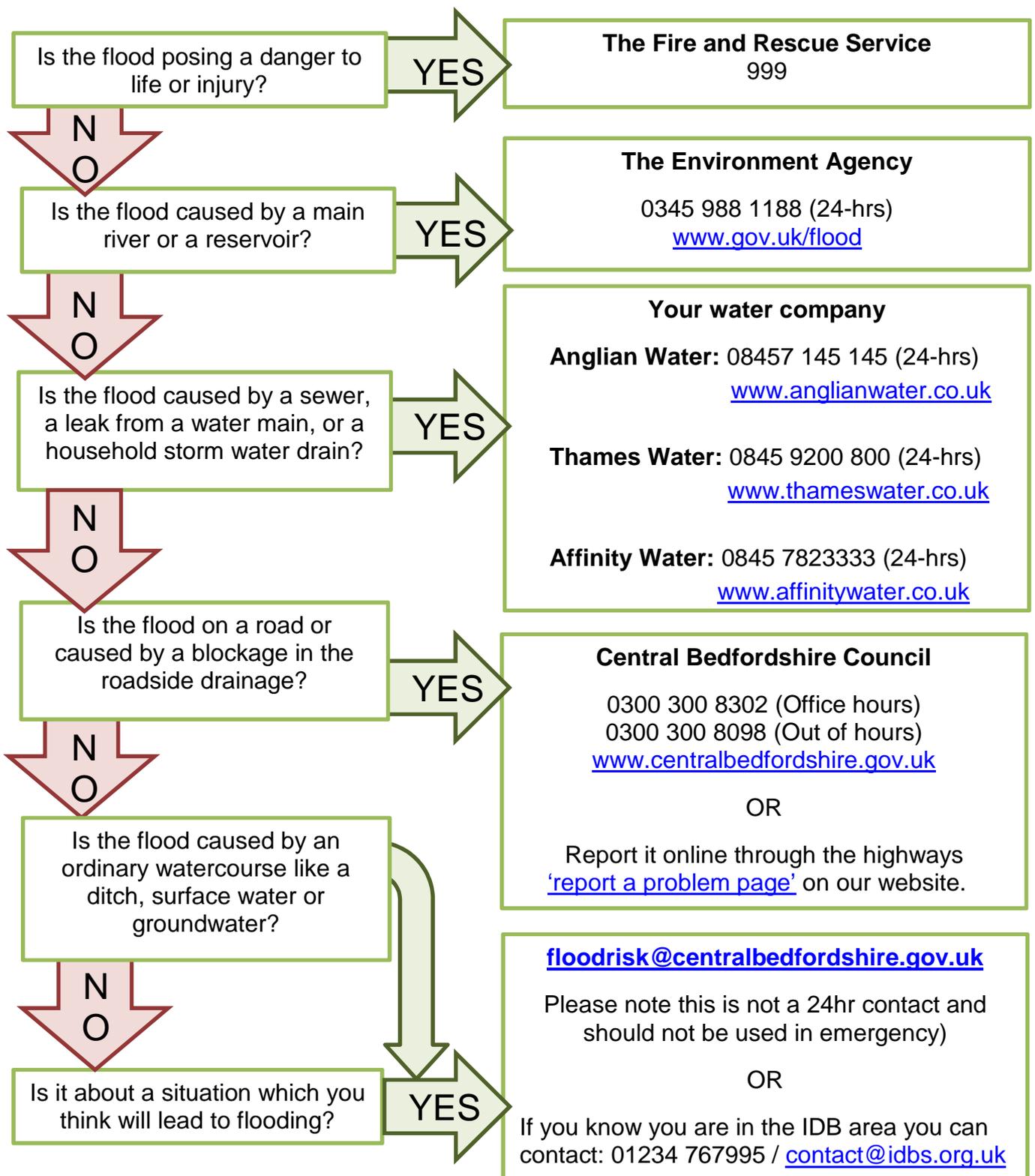
**Individuals** for smaller reservoirs and water bodies.

## Who to contact and when

### This section provides a summary of local responders and their contact details for different types of flooding.

The responsibility for dealing with flooding is not limited to the council. Based on the 'type' of flooding different agencies will be better placed to assist you.

If you believe that your personal safety is at risk from a flood, please call the Fire and Rescue Service immediately using **999**.



## Reporting a problem

### The table below has a list of useful 'go-to contacts'

You may want to keep a hard copy of this leaflet with your home emergency kit or in a safe place. If you believe that your personal safety is at risk call the Fire and Rescue Service immediately on **999**.

Organisation	Contact details
<b>Environment Agency</b>	0345 988 1188 (24-hrs)
Flood line	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/flood">www.gov.uk/flood</a>
<b>Anglian Water</b>	08457 145 145 (24-hrs)
Customer services	<a href="http://www.anglianwater.co.uk">www.anglianwater.co.uk</a>
<b>Thames Water</b>	0845 9200 800 (24-hrs)
Customer services	<a href="http://www.thameswater.co.uk">www.thameswater.co.uk</a>
<b>Affinity Water</b>	0845 7823333 (24-hrs)
Customer services	<a href="http://www.affinitywater.co.uk">www.affinitywater.co.uk</a>
<b>Central Bedfordshire Council</b>	
Customer services (Home & Environment)	0300 300 8302 (Office hours) 0300 300 8098 (Out of hours) <a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Central Bedfordshire Council</b>	0300 300 8049
Highways	<a href="#">Report it now</a>
Flood Risk Management Team	<a href="mailto:Floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">Floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Bedfordshire Group of Internal Drainage Boards</b>	01234 767995
Customer services	<a href="mailto:contact@idbs.org.uk">contact@idbs.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.idbs.org.uk">http://www.idbs.org.uk</a>
<b>Bedfordshire Police</b>	01234 841212
Main switchboard	
<b>Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service</b>	01234 351081 (24-hrs)
Main switchboard	

## Who does what when it comes to flooding?

**It can be difficult to know who is responsible for doing what when it comes to drainage and flooding, find out more about the different roles and responsibilities of those involved. This section of the guide has been split into 3 parts for your convenience.**

### Part 1. What is your role when it comes to flooding?

The responsibility for the protection of property lies with property and land owners.

#### Home owners

- Protecting their own property from flooding.
- Acquiring contents and buildings insurance for their home.
- Taking action to prepare for flooding.
- Maintaining any private drainage and making sure it drains effectively, including: gullies and drains on shared private access roads and courtyards etc., and any external pipework up to the water company's stop tap or the edge of the highway or pavement. This can mean having responsibility for a pipe which runs beyond your property boundary and across third party land.
- Private cesspools and septic tanks.

#### Land owners

Land owners have similar responsibilities for ensuring their private drainage and any natural drainage, such as a watercourse, does not cause flooding to their own or surrounding land.

- Maintenance of private flood defences on their land including any private drainage systems.
- The maintenance of watercourses and other water bodies within their boundaries or which border these, including repairs and clearing.
- Registering large raised reservoirs (about the same size as 10 Olympic sized swimming pools) with the Environment Agency.
- Managing the risk from small reservoirs on their land.

#### Developers

Developers have a responsibility to mitigate the effects of new development on flooding, this includes:

- Locating vulnerable areas of development away from known flood risk.
- Ensuring a development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant.
- Taking into account the availability of water and effectiveness of drainage for the lifetime of the development and to protect water quality.

Some development will require a Flood Risk Assessment to prove the above has been taken into account, the [Environment Agency's website](#) provides more information on this.

## Part 2. How do different services within Central Bedfordshire Council respond to flooding?

### The Emergency Planning team

If a major incident occurs for example as a result of severe flooding, the council will work with its partners to co-ordinate a multiagency response.

This response will be made up of the different organisations that are involved in managing flooding and responding to emergencies in the local area.

The team will work to support local communities, for example they may set up assistance centers and find suitable emergency accommodation, provide welfare arrangements, and co-ordinate emergency volunteer groups.

However please remember that all services are likely to be limited during a widespread emergency and that property owners have a responsibility to protect their home or business and should therefore check that they have flood defences in advance as we do not give these out to the public upon request (this includes sandbags).

### Our role as the 'Lead Local Flood Authority'

As the Lead Local Flood Authority for our area we are responsible for managing 'local' sources of flood risk, this means flood risk from surface water, ordinary watercourses (i.e. non-main rivers), and from groundwater (when it emerges and starts to flow over ground).

Our [Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#) outlines the nature and severity of risk of flooding in Central Bedfordshire and sets our objectives for managing and reducing the future risk of flooding to local communities. This also helps us to co-ordinate our actions with the flood-related work of other flood risk agencies that operate within our area.

### The Lead Local Flood Authority also:

- Assess local flood risk and strive to improve our understanding of the location of our most vulnerable areas.
- Identify opportunities for flood alleviation and enhanced protection where it is most needed, we also look for opportunities to attract partnership funding for this type of work.
- Investigate and where necessary publish reports on flooding incidents, if they meet the thresholds set out in the Strategy.
- Advise on flood risk issues on new developments and sustainable approaches to providing drainage.
- Collect information on the location of features that effect flood risk.
- Use powers of enforcement to regulate activities that could otherwise lead to flooding, including deciding whether works on or near ordinary watercourses are allowed or not.

Please note that our role as the Lead Local Flood Authority does not extend to responding to emergencies caused by flooding, this role is taken up by our emergency planning team and the emergency services.

## **Our role as the Highways Authority**

As the local highways authority we have a duty to keep the highway safe and useable, this includes draining the roads and keeping them clear of flood water. To do this we undertake maintenance of highway drainage. This might be through routine activities (like emptying highway gullies) or taking action in response to an emergency caused by flooding (closing and diverting roads or the provision of sandbags and pumping facilities to keep the highway working). Such measures may also protect nearby properties however is not the focus of this work.

## **The Environmental Health Team**

The council has a responsibility to ensure that privately owned drains and sewers do not cause a nuisance or risk to public health, for instance where owners have allowed them to remain blocked or defective.

In some circumstance the environmental health team may order that improvement works are carried out, this could include the replacement of a private drain. They might do this if, for example, a drain is too small for your property or if it's causing a blockage.

## **The Local Planning Authority**

Although not a responder, the local planning authority plays a role in managing how development effects and interacts with flooding.

This is done by using local policies and plans to:

- Locate unnecessary new development away from areas of high flood risk.
- Reducing the impact of new development on flood risk by using sustainable approaches to drainage.

Central Bedfordshire Council's [supplementary planning guidance on sustainable drainage \(SuDS\)](#) provides technical guidance on sustainable drainage, and has been created to be a comprehensive resource for SuDS reference and policy development.

More information on SuDS is also available on our website:

[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood).

## Part 3. How do other organisations outside of the council respond to flooding?

### The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is responsible for overseeing flood risk from 'main rivers', reservoirs and the sea. They also have a responsibility to monitor the way other sources of flooding are managed, for example by the council. They provide forecasting and warning and must also look for opportunities to maintain and improve the environment for people and wildlife while carrying out all of its duties.

See their website for more information: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### The Water and Sewerage Companies

Sewerage undertakers are responsible for operating and maintaining the condition of public sewerage systems in order to reduce the risk of sewer flooding. This is made up of: foul water, surface water and combined systems. [Anglian Water](#) and [Thames Water](#) are responsible for the county's public sewerage systems.

### The Internal Drainage Board (IDB)

Parts of the county fall under the authority of the Bedford Group of Internal Drainage Boards.

Internal Drainage Boards are historic, independent bodies that manage areas with 'special drainage needs'. They are responsible for the management of the water levels in ordinary watercourses and for maintaining certain parts of the drainage system within their area, which is known as a 'drainage district'.

The Bedford Group of Internal Drainage Boards undertakes the role of consenting for works on ordinary watercourses within their drainage district; they also deliver this role on behalf of the Lead Local Flood Authority outside of this district. The purpose of this type of regulation is to control certain activities that might otherwise have a negative effect on flooding or on the environment.

See their website for more information: [www.idbs.org.uk](http://www.idbs.org.uk)

### The Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (BLRF)

Local Resilience Forums co-operate in preparing for and responding to emergencies. Their overall purpose is to ensure that there is an appropriate level of preparedness to enable an effective multi-agency response to emergencies which could have a significant impact on local communities.

See their website for more information: [www.blrf.org.uk](http://www.blrf.org.uk)

### Insurers

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) represents the interests of insurance companies in the UK. It is important to read and understand the terms and conditions of a policy before purchasing it.

For more information on accessing flood insurance see the [www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk](http://www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk).

## Investigating drainage and flood events

### In an emergency

In an emergency, residents should always contact the Fire and Rescue Service if they believe they are in any danger.

In situations where forecasting from the [MET Office](#) or the Environment Agency indicate that flooding is likely, the council will work with other local agencies and the Local Resilience Forum on a collective response to protect people and property. The type of the response will depend on the characteristics of the flood, for example how long it has or will last for, and what it has or is likely to effect in terms of people and property.

This type of response will strive to benefit the most households possible and to protect the most vulnerable types of people, such as the elderly.

However we can never guarantee to protect every single property, particularly where there is widespread flooding across the whole county and **we will not issue defenses such as sand bags or sand-less alternatives like ‘aqua-sacs’ upon demand to individuals or businesses**, as we do not have the resources to do this. Individuals should therefore take the relevant steps to make sure they are prepared to keep flood water out of their home or business. For more info please see the next chapter.

The council will provide information to help keep residents and communities updated and to inform them how we are responding. We will also help to provide advice and highlight what members of the public can do to protect themselves and their property.

### When will the authority investigate if it's not an emergency?

As the Lead Local Flood Authority the council has the ability to investigate flooding or other land drainage issues (like poorly maintained watercourses) that could or have resulted in flooding. We do not have to do this for every case that is reported to us and will only look into the most critical issues.

Upon learning of a flood incident or a situation which could lead to flooding we may investigate who is responsible for taking action to prevent future flooding and whether appropriate action has been taken. Recommendations may also be made to reduce the future risk.

We will only do this if we feel the situation warrants an investigation due to the risk that it poses. We determine this risk based on the characteristics of a flood (depth, duration, frequency etc.) and the potential that it has to disturb or damage property, people or critical infrastructure.

### What can you can expect from an investigation?

Reporting a flood incident to us does not mean that the council will undertake works to resolve the issue.

We may however identify the responsible party and work on a solution with them or hand over the issue to another agency which has the most appropriate powers to address the threat.

If we find that the responsibility lies with an individual or land owner we will expect them to undertake certain steps to make sure the risk of flooding is reduced for the future.

## **Contacting the Lead Local Flood Authority**

If you notice that a watercourse is in poor condition or that a landowner continually fails to undertake their riparian responsibilities and you believe that maintenance work is essential, please report it to:

email: [floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

**Please be aware that this inbox is not monitored 24/7. You should not report a flood to us if it is an emergency, if you are in any danger contact the Fire and Rescue Service on 999.**

## **Investigating damage**

Your insurance company's loss adjuster or a structural engineer is the most appropriate person to identify structural damage to a building after a flood.

## **Get evidence of flooding**

Take photos of any flood damage or water inside of your property. Make a list of anything that has been damaged, including food that you may have to throw away. This will help you with future discussions with the council or insurers.

It is useful to record details such as what was affected, how deep the flood water was and how long it lasted for, as well as any notes on where the water seems to have come from or what it may have been caused by.

If you've done flood protection work on your property, you or a surveyor can complete a [Flood Risk Report](#) to tell insurers or buyers how the effective the measures were.

## Be prepared and know your risk!

**Flooding: you can't prevent it, but you can prepare for it. We can't always stop flooding but if you know your property or business is in an area at risk of flooding there are a number of simple steps you can take early on to prepare...**

### How to find out if you are at risk of flooding

You can use the Environment Agency's interactive maps to see if your home or business is in an area deemed to be at risk of flooding. These are available on their website ['what's in your backyard'](#).

Click on the link below and type in your postcode to find out more about the risk to your property from surface water, river flooding and reservoir flooding:

- <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk?err=postcode>

Please be aware that these maps are intended as a guide only and are not designed to be 100% accurate at an individual property level.

### Make a flood plan

If you live in a flood risk area do what you can now to prepare for a flood. Don't wait until it happens, you may not have time. Making a personal or business flood plan or even contributing to a community flood plan will help you to decide what practical actions to take before, during and after a flood.

Flood plan templates and a checklist of things you can do to prepare are available from the [Environment Agency's 'make a flood plan'](#).

### Sign up for free flood warnings

The Environment Agency provides a free flood warning service called 'Flood line' to many areas at risk of flooding. You can choose to receive these warnings by telephone, mobile, SMS text, email, or fax. A message will be sent to you directly if flooding is expected in your local area.

The Flood Line service also provides free advice on what to do before during and after a flood.

Flood line is available 24 hours a day seven days a week and you can contact them by calling: 0345 988 1188 or visiting their website [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood).

## **Make sure you are familiar with how the Environment Agency's warning system works**

The Environment Agency uses a four stage system that includes an 'warnings no longer in force' stage when all flood warnings and flood watches are removed. Each warning type is triggered by particular weather, river or sea conditions which cause flooding.

The definition of each stage is:

- **Flood alert** – flooding is possible. Be prepared.
- **Flood warning** – flooding is expected. Immediate action required.
- **Severe flood warning** –severe flooding. Danger to life.
- **Warnings no longer in force** – no further flooding is currently expected in your area.

## **Know what to do when a warning is issued**

- Listen out for further flood information on radio and TV.
- Put your mobile phone on charge upstairs in case you lose power.
- Put important documents like insurance and bank details and contact details in a water proof bag.
- Move your car to higher ground.
- Move pets, valuables and other items to safety (upstairs if possible).
- Alert your neighbours, particularly the elderly.
- Put any flood protection products or equipment in place – but make sure your property is ventilated.
- Put plugs into sinks and baths.
- Be ready to turn off gas and electricity. Unplug electrical items and move them upstairs if possible.
- Co-operate with emergency services and local authorities – you may be evacuated to a rest centre in sever flooding.
- Remember to always try and do as much as you can in the daylight. Doing anything in the dark will be a lot harder.

## Flood warnings for surface water

Unfortunately the Environment Agency warnings do not apply to surface water. The MET Office does however provide serve wet weather warnings, which can be used to inform you when heavy rainfall is likely. This should give you some idea if surface water is likely or if ordinary watercourses are likely to have high flows. To receive severe weather warnings go to the MET Office's website [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

## Other free local warnings and advice

- **Flood app** – Receive free warnings about your preferred locations, available from the Apple App Store.
- **Flooding on Facebook:** Flood Group UK have set up a page to keep you up to date and in touch on flooding issues.

**Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum:** Follow the forum on Twitter: @what\_would or Facebook [www.facebook.com/BedfordshirePrepared/](http://www.facebook.com/BedfordshirePrepared/) for tips.

## Make sure you know the council's policy on sandbags

Central Bedfordshire Council will **not** issue sandbags to the public on demand as a form of flood defense for private property and small businesses.

We only have a limited stock of sandbags and these are for use by our emergency response teams where we know they will be most effective, for example to defend critical infrastructure.

As a property owner, the protection of your home or business is ultimately a matter for you and we accept that it is your choice whether to use sandbags or alternative defense measures. If you do require sandbags to help protect your property from flooding please ensure that you purchase them before a flooding incident occurs and remember that they will be of little use if a property is already flooded.

We are aware of the limitations of sandbags to prevent or reduce flood damage and would like to promote that property owners look into alternative defense measures which may provide them with more protection, and save you money and time in terms of storage, deployment, usage and cleanup. If you do use traditional sandbags for flood defense purposes please be aware that they can easily become contaminated once they come into contact with floodwater.

## Where to get flood defenses like sandbags from

During early warning stages sandbags can normally be obtained from local builders' merchants, filled or empty, and you can store your own sand to fill when needed. Or you could visit website such as [www.sandbagsuppliers.co.uk](http://www.sandbagsuppliers.co.uk). You can also consider purchasing 'sand-less sandbags', these all use the same principle of having a gel-like substance inside that swells up when wet and gives the bag volume. As they swell they mould to the available space, creating a much more effective seal than traditional sandbags. Made using modern but biodegradable fabric, they can be stored easily and deployed quickly so are ideal for any flash flooding situation. They can also be dried out and reused as long as they're not contaminated with sewage. They do cost a little more than traditional sandbags, but can provide much better protection and value.

## **How to use sand bags effectively**

The best advice on the use of sandbags is available from the Environment Agency's leaflet [Sandbags: how to use them properly for flood protection](#).

## **If you use sandbags make sure you dispose of them safely**

Used sandbags will not routinely be collected from residents after flooding incidents by the council. Once the risk of flooding has passed it is the responsibility of the homeowner to dispose of any used or spoilt defenses like sandbags.

### **The following can be used as a guide:**

- Often more than one flooding incident can occur in quick succession so wherever possible store full or empty bags that have not come into contact with flood water to use again.
- If you do not wish to store the sand or the bags, once empty the bags can be placed in the wheelie bin and the sand dug into the garden if you have one, or taken to your local household waste and recycling centre.
- Sandbags that have come into contact with flood water may be contaminated, therefore ensure that you wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly after handling sandbags. Remember that wet sandbags will be heavy. Double bag used sand bags (bin liners can be used) and take them to your nearest household recycling centre for disposal.
- Do not place full sandbags or the sand in your wheelie bin.
- Do not allow children to play with the sand, or place it in sand pits, due to possible contamination. The sand is not suitable for this purpose, and it may harm your children.

## **Get involved with taking action against flooding: join the Bedfordshire Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

'CERT' is a local volunteer group that is trained and ready to help provide relief before, during and after an emergency. CERT members are at the heart of the community and help provide assistance to those in need. If you are interested in joining CERT to help alongside other emergency responders see below.

To find out about joining: 0300 300 4145 or email [membership@bllrf.org.uk](mailto:membership@bllrf.org.uk)

## Staying safe during a flood

### The first priority is protecting life: yours and your family's

The following information will help you know what to do to keep safe from flood water, however if you are in any danger contact the Fire and Rescue Service on 999.

#### Be prepared for bad weather

- Make sure that you have emergency contact numbers for your insurer, local authority and utility companies to hand in a safe, waterproof place.
- Listen out for bad weather warnings on local radio and TV and Flood Line (0345 988 1188).
- Check the Environment Agency's website to find out your flood risk and, if you live in an area at risk of flooding, sign up for their free flood warning service.
- If you have a car, move it away from where flooding is expected.
- Check if it is safe to use electricity, gas and water supplies.
- Make sure any unsecured items, like ladders in gardens, that can cause damage in high winds are secured.
- Ensure you have your own supply of sand bags or other protection measures to keep water out of your home.
- Block gaps such as door ways and airbricks and put any property protection measures in place.

#### Stay out of flood water

Remember – floods can kill.

- Do not approach any fast flowing water or deep standing water. If you enter swiftly flowing water, you risk drowning, regardless of your ability to swim.
- Shallow standing water can be dangerous for small children.
- If you have to enter floodwater, in all cases move slowly and carefully, make sure you are wearing strong footwear and use a stick to check that you are not about to step into a hole or onto a sharp object.
- Avoid walking through flood water. Man hole covers may have come off and there may be other hazards you can't see.
- If driving in floods is unavoidable, do so with extreme caution. 6 inches depth of fast flowing water can sweep a 4x4 vehicle off a road.
- Drive considerately: remember your bow-wave could flood nearby homes.

## **Stay safe from contamination**

Floodwater may be contaminated, especially by untreated sewage. Contamination remains after the floodwater has gone and can be hazardous unless simple procedures are followed:

- Wear rubber boots and gloves in and around the affected property.
- Wash all cuts and cover with waterproof plasters. It is advised that anyone receiving a puncture wound during flood recovery should have a doctor determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary.
- Small children, pregnant women and people with health problems should avoid floodwater and flooded areas until the clean-up is complete.
- However, if you do feel unwell or if you accidentally ingest (swallow) mud or contaminated water and you become ill, you should consult your doctor and telling them that your house was flooded.
- Floodwater can damage buildings severely, particularly if it has been flowing quickly, is over 1 m deep or has been in a property for a long time.

## **Be aware of damage**

Do not approach any structure that may be unsafe.

- Before entering property that has been flooded, the building should be checked for signs of damage.
- Be careful when moving any debris that may have been carried onto your property or the surrounding area. Avoid heavy objects (e.g. trees) that may be unstable and could suddenly move and trap or crush you. Do not attempt to move anything yourself that cannot be lifted comfortably.
- Be careful when moving in and around property that has been flooded. Standing water and mud can hide holes, damage to structures and sharp objects. This could include uncovered manholes and drains or roads and paths, as well as broken bottles or glass.

## **Gas and electrics**

Always use extreme caution in dealing with electricity.

- Turn off gas and electrics before water enters your property.
- Have a qualified electrician or utility company check out the electrics after a flood. Ensure that all switches, sockets and appliances are checked prior to use, especially if they have been in contact with floodwater.
- Once all electrical safety checks have been made, make sure that you use a circuit breaker with any electrical equipment that you may use in, or to clean, or repair your property.
- Remember that vents/flues may have been affected on gas appliances.
- Watch out for any fallen power lines and do not approach them – be aware that there is always a potential electric shock hazard.

### **If your garden is flooded**

- 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 be no further risk as sunlight and soil will usually destroy harmful bacteria within a week.
- Don't eat any vegetables you may be growing that may have been contaminated.

### **For more information**

- Visit [www.blrf.org.uk](http://www.blrf.org.uk) to find out more about local risk and preparation
- See more on how to prepare for flooding at [www.knowyourfloodrisk.co.uk](http://www.knowyourfloodrisk.co.uk)
- See the Government's advice on [flooding and extreme weather](#) at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
- [View advice on knowing your flood risk](#) by Mary Dhonau OBE, Chief Executive of the Know Your Flood Risk Campaign.

## Protecting your property for the future

**Water can get into a building in many different ways, even though the walls or up through the floor depending on the nature of the flood and the way your property has been built.**

### **Why protecting your property is worth while**

Even a small amount of water can have a devastating impact with damage to your property and belongings, some of which may have to be replaced. The following information will help you on your way to resilience and recovery.

### **Who's responsibility is it?**

Ultimately property owners are responsible for taking appropriate action to protect their property from flooding. If your home is in an area where the risk of flooding is high, you may choose to have flood prevention products easily to hand in the event of an emergency.

### **What can be done to reduce the impact of flooding on your property?**

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to effective flood protection and it is not possible to make sure your property will always be completely flood-proof but you can make some alterations to significantly reduce the time, costs and stress associated with recovering from flood damage.

### **What are the options?**

Below are just a few examples of the ways flood protection can be used on your property. Whilst the council does not endorse any of these products, we hope this guide will help you to make informed decisions.

#### **1. Flood resistance measures – stop the water getting in.**

- **Doors** – consider purpose built flood board/gates that can be put in place when flooding is imminent. It may be possible to replace your existing external door with one that is flood-proof. Door thresholds can also be raised.
- **Walls and floors** – consider raising damp-proof brick courses. Sealing floors and 'tanking' can prevent water rising up through the ground.
- **Air bricks** – replace with those that automatically close when flood water rises or fit specially designed covers that can be placed over ventilation bricks when flooding is likely.
- **Drains and pipes** – non-return valves on drains and water inlets/outlets can prevent water from coming back up the drains and toilet foul pipe.
- **Pumps** – self-priming pumps can pump dirty and clean water to enable the emptying of flooded rooms, cellars, ditches etc. Using a pump in a sump under the floor could help to keep the water level down.

We recommend you [use the Property Protection Advisor tool](#) online when considering longer term or permanent changes to your property. It allows you to enter details of your property and will provide a breakdown of suitable measures and product costs for your property. It is free to use and has no ongoing obligations.

## **2. Flood resilient measures – limit the damage caused by flood water should it get into the property and reduce the time and cost needed to get back to normal afterwards.**

- **Raised electrics** – fit plug sockets, boilers, and service meters higher on walls.
- **Water-resistant door and window frames**
- **Check for gaps in access points for pipes and fill** – e.g. washing machines.
- **Use waterproof sealant on external walls and waterproof paint on internal walls**
- **Replace carpets** – e.g. with hard flooring like tiles or use rugs rather than fitted carpets).
- **Use lime or cement render** – this is more water-resistant than normal plaster.

### **When to consider property level protection**

Whether and to what extent flood protection measures are necessary will depend on the degree of flood risk, and the vulnerability of your house and occupants. Assessing the flood risk to a particular property and deciding how to reduce it is not easy.

### **Get an independent survey first**

It is strongly recommended that, prior to fitting any measures, you arrange for an independent survey of your property by a suitably trained, independent professional with expertise in flood risk assessment. This will help you choose the products most appropriate to your property and personal needs. See below for links to useful providers and their websites.

### **Check for the kite-mark when purchasing products**

When considering a particular flood product, such as a flood-proof door or barrier, check that it has been tested to industry standards by looking for the 'Kite-mark' symbol or equivalent accreditation. Kite-marked products are usually favored by insurers.

### **Before making permanent changes to a property...**

If you're going to make permanent changes to protect your property against flooding, it is strongly recommended you seek professional advice.

### **Contact your insurer**

Remember to check with your insurer to ensure they are aware of any flood resilience improvements you have made and if there is an opportunity to save on costs.

### **For more information**

- On asking a [building surveyor](#), [architect](#) or other independent professional for advice on permanent flood protection measures.
- Use the [Flood Protection Advisor](#) to find out how much it could cost to protect your home.
- For suppliers, [search the National Flood Forum directory](#).
- Look for the [Kitemark](#) when buying flood protection products.
- If you are a home or business owner at risk of flooding read [guidance on how to protect your home or small business](#) from a flood.
- If you are at risk and live in a historic building read [advice from English Heritage](#).

Central  
Bedfordshire

**great**  
communities

# Central Bedfordshire in contact

## Find out more

For more information about this publication, further copies, or a large print copy, get in touch.

## Please recycle me!

When finished with, please put me in your recycling bin or bag.



[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



[www.facebook.com/letstalkcentral](https://www.facebook.com/letstalkcentral)



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



[customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



0300 300 8000