

# Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Flood Warden Handbook



## What is a Community Flood Warden?

Community Flood Wardens are completely voluntary and can consist of a single person or several people. Flood wardens play an important role in the warning and prevention of flooding within the community. They provide a vital link between the local residents and those responsible for responding to an incident.

Roles and responsibilities of flood wardens will differ in each community depending on the requirements of that community during flooding however generally, flood wardens help to raise awareness of any flood risks in their community, pass on flood warnings when they are issued, help residents prepare for flooding and can also help vulnerable people both during and after flooding has occurred. A Community Flood Warden may also be part of another group such as Neighbourhood Watch, voluntary groups or the Parish Council. By working together, flood wardens can develop a robust network of flood wardens who are able to respond to flooding in a coordinated and efficient way.

Community Flood Wardens are an important part of the local community and play a key role in assisting the Environment Agency, water authority, local and county councils with local information on flood conditions. For example, before or during a potential flooding event, the Community Flood Wardens may be contacted to give an account



of ground conditions, water levels and weather to help the Emergency Planning team and Environment Agency activate relevant plans and to coordinate an appropriate response across the county.

Community Flood Wardens may also notice or may have been given information about a blocked watercourse, culvert, drain or burst pipe. The Community Flood Warden should then report this to the relevant agency so that the necessary remedial action is carried out. By doing this, watercourses will be kept flowing unobstructed thus reducing the risk of local flooding.

### **Locally appointed Community Flood Wardens are important because:**

- ✓ Local people will know the Community Flood Warden personally, leading to mutual trust and understanding.
- ✓ Local people are more likely to accept warnings and advice which are reinforced by a familiar local person.
- ✓ A local Community Flood Warden would be familiar with those people and properties at risk. They could distribute leaflets on flood warning and emergency response arrangements to properties at risk of flooding and ensure people receive and understand them.
- ✓ A local Community Flood Warden would be able to provide the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and Local Resilience Forum (LRF) with local information during a flood event and confirm conditions on the ground. An important two-way information link would be established.

### **Community Flood Wardens can:**

- ✓ Encourage communities to help themselves with training and support from the Environment Agency, local and county councils and emergency services.
- ✓ Develop good local communication links with other local groups for passing out information and receiving feedback.
- ✓ Help build partnerships which would bring improvements in flood preparedness and response such as with Neighbourhood Watch and Parish Councils.



## Types of Flooding

Flood Wardens may encounter many different types of flooding. Depending on the community you operate in, a number of factors will determine what type of flooding might occur. The main types of flooding are:

**Coastal flooding (tidal)** – This happens when high tides and stormy conditions occur at the same time. A tidal surge may form which can cause serious flooding.

**River flooding (fluvial)** - Happens when a watercourse cannot cope with the water draining into it from the surrounding land. This can happen, for example, when heavy rain falls on an already very wet catchment.

**Surface water flooding (pluvial)** - Happens when heavy rainfall overwhelms the drainage capacity of the local area. It is much more difficult to predict and pinpoint than river or coastal flooding.

**Sewer flooding** - Happens when sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or when they become blocked. The likelihood of flooding depends on the capacity of the local sewerage system. Land and property can be flooded with water contaminated with raw sewage as a result. Rivers can also become polluted by sewer overflows.

**Groundwater flooding** - Happens when water levels in the ground rise above surface levels. Groundwater flooding can last for several weeks.

**Reservoir flooding** - Some reservoirs hold large volumes of water above ground level, contained by walls or dams. Although the safety record for reservoirs is excellent, it is still possible that a reservoir dam could fail. This would result in a large volume of water being released very quickly.

## Environment Agency Services

### Flood Warnings and flood information

The Environment Agency is the principal flood risk management operating authority in England. They have powers to provide measures to reduce the risk of flooding on main rivers and tidal waters. The Environment Agency issue Flood Warnings to the public, businesses, the media and organisations warning them of the risk of flooding and encouraging action to be taken. This service is for most main rivers, estuaries and along the coast.

It cannot provide a service for all watercourses. Rivers and streams that rise rapidly in response to rainfall cause particular difficulties because there is insufficient time to issue specific warnings. In some localities, a general warning service is provided, in others it is not possible to provide a warning service at all. The Environment Agency does not provide a warning service in respect of local flooding from sewers, road drainage, overland flow, dam bursts or blockages however it does provide a series of alerts and warnings using the symbols in Table 1. Note that these are not always used in sequence, for example, in the case of a flash flood, a Severe Flood Warning may be issued immediately with no other warning code preceding it.

The flood warning service is a multimedia messaging system that disseminates warning messages via a multiple of channels including telephone, mobile phone, email and SMS text messaging. You can sign up to flood warnings by registering online at: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings> .

A summary of the current warnings in place in England and Wales can be found on the Environment Agency website at:

<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>.

This page is refreshed every 15 minutes.

As a Flood Warden, you should be signed up to receive both Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings. Flood Alerts are issued when low-lying land and roads are expected to flood, and Flood Warnings when properties will be affected. The Flood Alert, which is often sent first, will give you more time to prepare your community for flooding.

## **Floodline**

Floodline call operatives can provide you with general information on how to prepare for flooding. There is also a recorded message system that Flood Wardens and members of the community can call to find out the latest information within your area.

Find out if your area is covered by Flood Warnings by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or checking on the Environment Agency website at: <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk> .

## **Five Day Flood Forecast**

A five-day flood forecast can be viewed at: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/5-day-flood-risk> .

## **River Levels on the Internet**

Current river levels can be viewed at: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/river-and-sea-levels>. River level information is updated twice daily in normal flows, and up to hourly in times of flooding.

## **Viewing a property's long-term flood risk**

The long-term flood risk of a property can be viewed at: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk>.

## **Practical advice and guidance**

Information publications on flooding can be found on the on the gov.uk website (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/environment-countryside/flooding-extreme-weather>) .

Advice is available on what steps to take before, during and after a flood, protecting your property from flooding and information on riparian ownership.

## **Sandbags**

Sandbags are of limited use during a flood and residents at flood risk should be encouraged to purchase purpose-designed flood protection equipment to help protect their home. Your community may already have a Community Response plan, usually managed by the Parish/Town Council along with other flood response equipment which may contain some sandbags. The Environment Agency does not provide sandbags to members of the public to protect their individual properties. Local Authorities also do not have a statutory duty to provide residents with sandbags to protect their properties. The Council will however assist where possible, with priority given to vulnerable residents. Residents may also be able to buy sandbags from builders' merchants or DIY stores.



**FLOOD ALERT**



**FLOOD WARNING**



**SEVERE FLOOD WARNING**

**Warning no longer in force**

<b>What it means</b>	Flooding is possible. Be prepared.	Flooding is expected. Immediate action required.	Severe flooding. Danger to life.	No further flooding is currently expected for your area.
<b>When it is issued</b>	Two hours to two days in advance of flooding.	Half an hour to one day in advance of flooding.	When flooding poses a significant risk to life or significant disruption to communities.	When a Flood Warning or Severe Flood Warning is no longer in force
<b>Impacts likely to be seen</b>	Flooding on fields, recreation land and car parks. Flooding of minor roads and farmland.	Flooding of homes and businesses Flooding of rail infrastructure Flooding of roads with major impacts Extensive flood plain inundation (including caravan parks or campsites)	Deep and fast flowing water Debris in the water causing danger Potential or observed collapse of buildings and structures Communities isolated by flood waters Critical infrastructure for communities disabled Large number of evacuees	No new impacts expected from flooding, however there still may be standing water following flooding. Flooded properties flooding or damaged infrastructure.
<b>Recommended actions</b>	Be prepared to act on your flood plan. Prepare a flood kit of essential items. Avoid walking, cycling or driving through floodwater. Farmers should consider moving livestock and equipment away from areas likely to flood.	Protect yourself, your family and help others. Move family, pets and valuables to a safe place. Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so. Put flood protection equipment in place. If you are caught in a flash flood, get to higher ground.		Be careful. Flood water may still be around for several days and be contaminated. If you have been flooded, ring your insurance company as soon as possible.

*Table 1: Flood Warning Service Symbols and meanings*

## What would a Community Flood Warden do?

The role of the Community Flood Warden is primarily one of communication, and there are many ways in which a Community Flood Warden can help their local community in times of flood. This can be split into actions taken before, during and after a flood.

### Before a Flood

A flood warden should be able to give advice and information to those at risk, explaining the risk to people in the community and encouraging them to be prepared for flooding. Flood Wardens should also raise any flood risk concerns to their local Environment Agency office or Local Authority depending on the responsibility of the authority involved.

Depending on the requirements of the community, Flood Wardens may be involved in:

- **Monitoring watercourses** – Reporting blockages and maintenance requirements early can help avoid unnecessary floods
- **Encouraging Flood Warning sign up** – Advertising in a local magazine, parish newsletter or community website is a great way of informing people to register for this. The Environment Agency can also provide material for you to display on notice boards, via leaflet drops or to distribute at community meetings. You can also raise awareness of Floodline so up to date flooding information can be accessed upon receipt of a flood warning.
- **Preparing a Community Flood Plan** – This is an important document and helps define actions required within your community before, during and after a flood. It should contain all the necessary information needed to prepare your community for flooding and to help ensure a smooth, well prepared community response to flooding. It will also identify trigger-based actions to take. Flood Warden details and flood areas should also be added. Parish councils might already have a Community Response plan which might include flooding however communities are always encouraged to produce their Community Flood Plans as part of a wider Community Response plan.
- **Identifying vulnerable residents** – This will help you prioritise those in need of help. It is recommended that Flood Wardens are aware of any vulnerable residents within their community and have a way of contacting them during a flood. Pet owners may need special consideration as the whereabouts and wellbeing of their pets will cause them additional concern. Encourage them to plan in advance how to keep their animals safe.



New residents moving into the area or temporary residents like tourists are very vulnerable to flooding due to their lack of local knowledge of local flood risks. For new residents, you could contact them reasonably soon after moving in explaining your role and encouraging them to sign up to receive free Flood warnings. However, for temporary visitors (who are staying at a holiday cottage for example), it is not recommended that you approach them to explain the Flood Warden role. It may however be appropriate to note these properties for attention during times of flooding.

- **Encouraging Property Flood Resilience and Home insurance** – Encourage residents to purchase flood resilience equipment to protect their property. Further information on equipment available can be found in the Blue Pages: <http://bluepages.org.uk/protecting-my-property/> .

Similarly, residents should be encouraged to insure their home if they haven't already. The FloodRe insurance scheme helps keep home insurance for flood risk residents affordable. Further information can be found at: <https://www.floodre.co.uk/>

- **Appointing Deputy Flood Wardens** – If the community you serve is quite large then performing the suggested activities above could be too much for one individual. This is also important if during a flood you are providing information on the situation to a large community and also provides resilience if a Flood Warden is on holiday or needs someone to cover them during a prolonged incident.



Brook blocked by debris

## During a Flood

Flood wardens are a key communication channel during times of flooding between the community and those whose job it is to provide support. Residents may look to their Flood Warden(s) to provide information and guidance.

The main role of a Flood Warden is to pass information from the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and Emergency Services to local residents and vice-versa. The information provided by the Flood Wardens will help the responding agencies allocate resources appropriately. Contact details of the agencies that you should pass information should be contained within your Community Flood Plan. There is also a section at the end of this handbook to contain these details.

A Flood Warden should make themselves known to emergency services on scene (where it is safe to do so and without entering a cordon). Local information that can be provided to aid the emergency response will be invaluable for example:

- Location of known vulnerable residents who may not be able to self-evacuate
- Details of properties where owners are away
- Buildings that can be used as a place of safety for evacuated residents (note the local authority might have already opened an emergency centre)
- Hazards that may be hidden by flood water e.g. manholes, drains and ditches

Tell them what they need to know, what your roles is and let them proceed unhindered.

During a flood event, the Flood Warden may be the instigator of the Community Flood Plan. This will include the duties highlighted above as well as practical issues like arranging the storage and placement of sandbags, flood boards and warning signs.

It is recommended that Flood Wardens should not live in property that is vulnerable to flooding. This is because a Flood Warden cannot easily pass information to local residents and assist the community with their response if they are trying to prevent their own property from flooding. If you are at risk of flooding and are keen to be a Flood Warden, it is recommended that you ensure you are personally well prepared so that you can quickly implement your own flood plan before helping others. The Environment Agency is able to provide you and members of your community with a personal flood plan template.

## After a Flood

Following a flood event, it is important that you should stay in a state of readiness until the 'all clear' has been received from the emergency services and Environment Agency (this may be a 'Warning No Longer in Force' message). This is because flooding could reoccur quite quickly, especially if the flooding is due to bad weather and the catchment is already saturated.

Some areas where Flood Wardens could help include:

- **Clearing up** – Once the 'all clear' has been received, the community can then begin to clear up the damage sustained during the flood event. You may be expected to provide guidance in the clear up efforts, but this should be clearly stated in your Community Flood Plan. Your Local Authority can help with information and advice. Where insurance claims are to be made, it may be necessary for loss adjusters to visit prior to removal of damaged belongings so make sure those who have been flooded know this.
- **Post event information collection** – It is important to try and collect as much information as possible about the flooding that occurred. This could be in the form of writing down notes throughout the incident of where and when the water levels rose, taking photographs detailing the location and time or speaking with members of the community about their experiences. This should be completed as soon after the flood event as possible while details are still fresh in the

## Health & Safety

The personal safety of a Flood Warden is of paramount importance. Please do not undertake any duties you are not comfortable with. Flood Wardens may encounter various hazards and dangers whilst performing their duties. You are urged not to place yourselves in any danger. Observe the instructions of the emergency services and do not undertake any evacuations.

Flood wardens should not walk or drive in flood water. It only takes 15cm (six inches) of fast flowing water to knock an adult over and only 60cm (two feet) of water to lift and sweep away a 4x4 or small lorry. In fact, a person can drown in just an inch (2.5cm) of water. There may also be hidden dangers and hazards in the water such as rubble, sewage, raised manhole covers, hidden drains, ditches and debris.

Flood wardens should not attempt to deal with any potentially difficult situations. This applies to dealing with someone who, in some way, hinders the flood response efforts. This could be through not moving a car when asked to do so or generally being

aggressive and uncooperative during the flood relief effort. Always approach people in a civil, polite manner clearly explaining what role you hold and how/if you can help. You should not try to deal with this situation but contact the relevant authorities that would take appropriate action.

Whilst attending to your responsibilities as a Flood Warden, people may expect you to help move items with them. This is not your responsibility as you are there to provide advice and co-ordinate the response effort and may most likely be needed elsewhere. If helping is unavoidable, be very careful not to lift anything too large, awkward or heavy. You are within your rights to refuse to do so should you deem this necessary.

Flood Wardens should not walk on uneven or slippery ground. Always wear sturdy, appropriate footwear and the correct personal protective equipment (PPE). Flood wardens should ensure that they are appropriately dressed before they go out especially when the weather is cold. This will reduce the risk of hypothermia.

To avoid contamination, it is advisable for Flood Wardens to wash all PPE after use. This should include gloves worn when moving flood equipment like sandbags. Keep open cuts or sores clean and use waterproof plasters to prevent them being exposed to floodwater.

Flood water can erode banks and damage structures therefore Flood Wardens should avoid standing on or near anything that may likely collapse or be vulnerable to damage.

## **What does a Community Flood Warden need?**

There are several things that can assist a Community Flood Warden in their role:

- A Community Flood Plan, created in partnership with the Environment Agency and their Local Authority, containing contact details of all relevant agencies and emergency services
- Information relating to Flood Warning arrangements
- Links to the Environment Agency flood risk maps: [www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood](http://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood)
- A sound knowledge of their local community and environment
- Be aware of those in the community who have access to tractors, pumps, boats, generators, winching equipment and 4-wheel drive vehicles
- High Vis and appropriate footwear
- Signed up to the Environment Agency's Flood Warning and Alerts service

## **Roles and Responsibilities – Authorities involved in Flooding**

A major flooding incident is one which involves the flooding of a significant number of properties, or significant disruption to key parts of the local infrastructure.

A number of organisations are involved in flood planning, response and recovery and they perform key roles at the local level.

The response also requires special arrangements to be put into place by one or more of the emergency services, the local authority and the Environment Agency. Examples of these special arrangements may consist of the activation of Major Incident Plans, opening of Emergency Rest Centres and the co-ordination of voluntary services such as the British Red Cross.

Here is a brief guide to the different agencies who may become involved in a major flood incident and the role each will play:

### **The Environment Agency**

- Is responsible for flood defences and the issuing of flood warnings in England.
- Provides the Floodline (03459 88 11 88) service
- Responds to reports of flooding
- Operates own structures and deploys temporary defences to reduce the risk of flooding
- Deals with emergency repairs and blockages on main rivers and own structures
- Responds to pollution incidents
- Advises on waste disposal issues

### **The Met Office**

- Provides weather forecasts, including severe weather alerts.
- Work with the Environment Agency at the Flood Forecasting Centre to provide a flood risk forecast.

### **Lead Local Flood Authority**

- These are generally County Councils and Unitary Authorities
- Prepare and maintain a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas
- Leads the investigation into flooding incidents including investigating significant local flooding incidents and publishing the results of such investigation
- Play a lead role in emergency planning and recovery after a flood event
- Flood risk assessment and management

## **Local Authorities**

### **County Council**

- Co-ordinates overall emergency arrangements
- Deal with road closures caused by overflowing drains and sewers
- Maintains safe conditions on the roads
- Organises road closures, traffic diversions and highway flood warning signage
- Road and footway drainage maintenance

### **District & Boroughs**

- Sets up rest centres for people evacuated from their homes and lead on welfare facilities for affected residents
- Arranges temporary accommodation for displaced residents
- Co-ordinates emergency response for its own area
- Clears blocked watercourses (Land Drainage Act powers)
- Deals with environmental health issues including pollution

### **Unitary Authority**

- Covers both County and District & Borough roles and responsibilities

### **The Police**

- Co-ordinate the emergency services in a major flood incident
- Help with evacuation of people from their homes where necessary and sometimes identify places of safety for evacuees to shelter before the local authority take this over
- Manage cordons to protect the public and property

### **The Fire and Rescue Service**

- Is responsible primarily for rescue, recovery and saving life
- Implement water rescue operations
- May (subject to operational requirements) pump out flood water. There may be a charge to householders for this service
- Conduct search and rescue operations
- Assist the public where a need is identified, and the use of Fire Service personnel and equipment is required
- May provide potable water if supplies are affected
- May take action to protect property from flooding by water from the public water mains or discharges from the public sewerage systems
- Emergency repairs e.g. burst water main
- Clears blockages in public sewers

### **The Ambulance Service**

- Is primarily responsible for saving life

### **Internal Drainage Boards**

- Are responsible for providing a flood protection and water-level management service within its statutory drainage districts
- Have powers to undertake works on any watercourse within its district, other than a 'main river'
- Advise on developing flood conditions

### **Canal and River Trust**

- Protect their own structures
- Along with other bodies, help warn the public about flood risk from their own navigation system such as canals and canalised rivers
- May provide specialist equipment, materials and other resources as appropriate by local agreement

### **Public Utility Companies**

- Secure their services and equipment to ensure continuity of supply
- Repair services disrupted by flood events
- Provide alternative means of supply during disruption if life and health risks are identified such as drinking water bowsers
- Advise local authorities and the media when disrupted services will be re-instated
- Attend emergencies relating to their service at properties where life is at risk because of flooding
- Attend to flooding emergencies at their own serviced installations

### **The Media**

- Issue flood warnings received from the Environment Agency to agreed standards
- Issue updated information during a flood event
- Issue 'All Clear' Messages received from the Environment Agency to agreed standards

### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

- Can give advice on how to obtain money in an emergency.
- Help to deal with insurance queries.

### **Voluntary Services**

- Can assist in staffing emergency rest centres
- Can assist in providing refreshments and support for the emergency services
- Can assist in many other ways depending on which charity/voluntary organisations are involved

## Flood Warden role in Brief

	<b>Should</b>	<b>Should Not</b>
<b>BEFORE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identify the flooding problems associated with their community</li> <li>✓ Make a Community Flood Plan in conjunction with the local authority</li> <li>✓ Monitor the state of the watercourses within their community</li> <li>✓ Encourage residents to sign up to receive free Flood Warnings</li> <li>✓ Distribute information to raise flood awareness within the community</li> <li>✓ Encourage residents to protect their properties in advance of a flood</li> <li>✓ Recruit deputy wardens if necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Have property vulnerable to flooding themselves if possible</li> <li>✗ Go on private property to monitor watercourses</li> </ul>
<b>DURING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Heed emergency services advice at all times</li> <li>✓ Consider their safety as paramount at all times</li> <li>✓ Provide a way of sharing information from the Environment Agency, Local Authority and emergency services to local residents</li> <li>✓ Collect flood event information, including photographs, maps and levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Operate or repair flood defence structures or equipment unless trained to do so</li> <li>✗ Enter flood waters at any time</li> <li>✗ Evacuate members of the community</li> <li>✗ Use any equipment that you have not been trained or authorised to use</li> <li>✗ Try to deal with argumentative or aggressive people themselves</li> <li>✗ Rescue people from flood water</li> </ul>
<b>AFTER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide guidance in the post flood clear up</li> <li>✓ Collect post flood data and share it with the Environment Agency or Local Authority</li> <li>✓ Help to relay information to the local community</li> </ul>	



## CONTACT DIRECTORY

This section is for Flood Wardens to list useful telephone numbers that could be used to find out information during flooding or to report problems.

**Floodline:** 0345 988 11 88  
(For up to date flooding information)

**Environment Agency** **24 Hour Flooding Incident hotline:**  
0800 80 70 60  
(to report flooding or other issues) **General Enquiries:**  
03708 506 506

**Environment Agency Warden Hotline**  
**(NOT to be shared publicly):** 0300 200 3174

**Leicestershire County Council** 0116 305 4556  
**Highways**  
**(Dangerous situations)**

**Leicestershire County Council** 0786 056 9137 (Duty Officer out of hours)  
**Highways** Non urgent enquiries via Customer Services on 0116 305 0001 or  
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-maintenance/report-a-road-problem>

**Resilience Partnership** 0116 305 6101 in hours  
0116 331 0135 out of hours (Emergency)

**Police** 999 or for non-emergencies 101

**Severn Trent Water** 0800 783 4444

**Anglian Water** 08457 145 145

**Gas (National Grid)** 0800 111 999

**Electricity (Western Power** 0800 056 8090

**Distribution)** 105 to report supply issues

**NHS 111** 111

**Please use the table below to input any other numbers you might find useful**

<b>Other Useful Numbers</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

**Flood Warnings:** <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>

**Flood Risk Maps:** [www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood](http://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood)

**Weather Warnings:** <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/guide-to-emails>

**Check if you are at risk of flooding:** [www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding](http://www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding)

**Flood Insurance:** <https://www.floodre.co.uk/>

### **Reporting a Flood**

Leicestershire County Highways  
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/report-a-flood>

Rutland County Highways  
<https://rutland.fixmystreet.com/>