



News Release

Contact: Al Sanders 206-477-1016 / Doug Williams, 206-477-4543

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King County officials urge preparedness as 'La Niña' forecast could amplify river flooding

Severe widespread flooding from storms across the U.S. illustrate flood dangers

SUMMARY

Images of people as they are rescued from homes and cars inundated by rising floodwaters in Texas, Puerto Rico and elsewhere underscore why preparation and awareness of flood hazards are so important. And with climate scientists calling for a "La Niña" winter weather pattern to soak the Pacific Northwest, King County and the King County Flood Control District proclaimed October as Flood Awareness Month.

STORY

Recent severe flood damage in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico is a grave reminder to prepare for possible flood hazards – particularly as climate scientists predict a "La Niña" weather pattern this winter that could mean more flooding from rain-laden storms across King County.

King County Executive Dow Constantine and the King County Flood Control District Chair Reagan Dunn today declared October as **Flood Awareness Month**, and urged everyone to prepare now for potential flood emergencies in the coming months.

"More Americans die each year from flooding than any other natural disaster," said Executive Constantine. "It's important to prepare for flooding now through basic steps such as assembling emergency preparedness kits and signing up for King County Flood Alerts."

"I would encourage anyone living in a flood plain to start thinking ahead about how you can prepare for this upcoming flood season," said Reagan Dunn, Council Vice Chair and Chair of the King County Flood Control District. "With all the resources King County provides it's easier than ever to be well informed about how to best protect your home, business, or property from flood damage."

"We are seeing devastating flooding across the country with alarming frequency," said King County Councilmember Dave Upthegrove, Vice Chair of the King County Flood Control District. "It is important that we raise awareness with King County residents so they can better protect their families, businesses and property from floods."

Climate scientists note that last year's weak "La Niña" winter weather pattern resulted in severe storms across much of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle received about 1 foot more rainfall than average from October 2016 through March of this year.

River flooding has led to 12 presidentially declared disasters in King County since 1990.

To prepare for a flood emergency, families can assemble a basic emergency preparedness kit for the home, with items such as a flashlight with spare batteries, a portable radio, non-perishable food, drinking water, extra clothes, cell phone chargers and books or games for kids. Learn more about emergency kits at takewinterbystorm.org.

King County provides information to allow residents the maximum amount of time to prepare for potential flooding on any of the county's six major river systems, as well as the South Fork Skykomish River in the northeastern corner of the county.

Download the free King County Flood Warning app to your mobile device and subscribe to King County Flood Alerts for your choice of a text, email or phone call alert on any or all county rivers.

Learn more about the app and sign up for King County Flood Alerts at kingcounty.gov/flood. This website offers the latest information about river levels and road conditions, plus weather reports and other critical links.

Additional preparations for flood season include:

- Buying flood insurance now. It takes 30 days for a policy to take effect, and a standard insurance policy will not cover flood damage. Contact your insurance agent or visit floodsmart.gov.
- Monitoring local media for information when severe weather is predicted. Listen for alerts about evacuation routes, and monitor local road conditions and obey closure signs.
- Minimizing flood damage by storing valuables and electronics higher, and by moving vehicles and equipment to high ground before flood waters rise.
- Disposing of hazardous chemicals, such as lawn and gardening herbicides, at one of the county's household hazardous waste sites to help reduce harmful contaminants in flood waters. Learn more at kingcounty.gov/hazwaste.

When flooding is imminent, King County employees gather, analyze and distribute flood warning information so that residents, businesses, property owners and emergency responders can make important public safety and economic decisions.

Once rivers rise to designated thresholds, King County's [Flood Warning Center](#) opens to monitor river gages, weather data, dam operations and road closures, 24 hours a day until the flood threat has passed.

County employees head into the field at designated flood levels to address safety concerns, such as flooded roadways, and to check on flood control facilities.

When the Flood Warning Center is open, citizens can speak directly to King County employees 24 hours a day by calling 206-296-8200 or 1-800-945-9263. Interpreter services are available.

Questions or assistance with flooding on smaller streams or urban drainage problems can be called in to 206-477-4811 during business hours or 206-477-8100 after hours or on weekends.

Efforts to protect people and property have earned King County a high from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System (CRS). King County's high CRS rating is saving policyholders in unincorporated King County more than \$1 million in flood insurance premiums – an average of \$425 per policy.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, King County has experienced twelve federally declared flood disasters since 1990; and

WHEREAS, major flooding conditions can cause significant damage to public and private property, disruption of public services, and loss of human life; and

WHEREAS, the King County Flood Control District, created in 2007, brings a comprehensive approach to flood management, provides funding to improve flood protection facilities, and has undergone eight clean State financial audits; and

WHEREAS, King County has a wide array of flood warning and emergency response capabilities when flooding occurs, so that residents, businesses, property owners, and emergency response officials can make critical health and safety decisions before, during, and after flood events; and

WHEREAS, King County has a nationally recognized floodplain management program that has helped reduce flood damage and lower the cost of flood insurance policies up to 40% for many residents; and

WHEREAS, the King County Flood Control District has secured grants for repairs and upgrades to public facilities and to assist property owners in elevating flood-prone structures;

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Metropolitan King County Council and King County Executive, proclaim the month of October 2017 as

FLOOD AWARENESS MONTH

in King County and encourage all residents living, working, or traveling through flood-prone areas to join us in developing a flood preparedness plan for themselves and their families.

DATED this ninth day of September, 2017.

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The King County Flood Control District is a special purpose government created to provide funding and policy oversight for flood protection projects and programs in King County. The Flood Control District's Board is composed of the members of the King County Council. The Water and Land Resources Division of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks develops and implements the approved flood protection projects and programs. Information is available at www.kingcountyfloodcontrol.org.