



ADVISING

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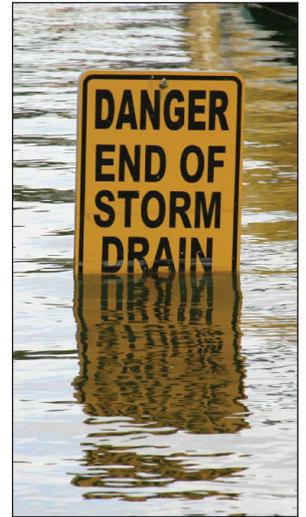
FLOODING IN SANGAMON COUNTY

When left undisturbed, a floodplain provides a storage area for flood waters, helping to reduce the height and flow of flooding. Floodplains also control erosion, filter runoff, recharge groundwater and provide habitat for a diverse array of plants and animals.

Sangamon County encourages the preservation of natural areas as a way to decrease the impact of flooding on our community. Particularly important to that is reducing the number of structures in the floodplain. When there are no buildings in a floodplain, loss of human life and damage to property is greatly diminished.

For example, in February 1999, Sangamon County finalized the grant-funded purchase of a 56-acre tract of land at the confluence of the South Fork of the Sangamon River and Sugar Creek. This property had been used as a river camp since the late 1800's, and over 40 structures were located there. This entire acreage is in the 100-year floodplain, and consequently the structures and their contents were often damaged by floodwaters, access to the area was cut off, and contamination of the water occurred. Now all of the structures are removed, the concrete roadway was excavated, and the area is returning to its natural state.

Sangamon County has also purchased land and structures that were damaged in the flood of May 2002 and created the County's first two parks with it: Carver-Yocum Homestead Park and South Fork Nature Preserve.



Springfield-Sangamon County
Regional Planning Commission
200 South 9th Street,
Room 212
Springfield, Illinois 62701
E-mail:
sscrpc@co.sangamon.il.us
Phone: 217-535-3110
Fax: 217-535-3111
Web: www.SSCRPC.com

FLOOD WARNINGS

The National Weather Service in Lincoln, Illinois, issues flood watches and warnings when appropriate. An urban and small stream advisory or a **FLASH FLOOD WATCH** is issued when heavy rains that could inundate streams or roadways are predicted. This message is immediately sent to radio and television stations in the area as well as the cable weather channel, and will also trigger an announcement on emergency broadcast radios. This announcement will generally be the lead item during the news or local weather forecast.

It is important that attention be given to these warnings as flash floods can be very dangerous. They occur when water accumulates so rapidly that it cannot be absorbed by the ground or accommodated by storm sewers. Flood waters can move rapidly carrying away anything in its path and can create deep areas of standing water. During a flash flood watch residents should stay aware of the weather and take necessary precautions if conditions worsen.

A **FLASH FLOOD WARNING** is issued when a flash flood is occurring. In addition to the information provided during a flash flood watch, areas of greatest hazard are identified. During periods of a warning, areas subject to flooding should be evacuated and avoided. Flood warnings are issued for the Sangamon River and South Fork of the Sangamon River when heavy rains occurring in areas to the east of Sangamon County will cause local flooding. These usually provide a couple of days lead time before flooding reaches our area and local weather forecasts will include this information along with predicted flood heights.



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FLOODING EVENTS

In May 2002, major flooding occurred in the County with the South Fork of the Sangamon River reaching the highest level in a 50-year period and the Sangamon River exceeding the 100-year flood elevation, although not reaching the 1943 height of five feet above the 100-year flood elevation. Major flooding has occurred in the recent past, including floods in 1993, 1995 and 1996.

DEBRIS BLOCKAGES

Often during flooding, road and bridge culverts become plugged with debris, diverting water and causing damage to roads and property. **If you see a blocked culvert, please contact the Sangamon County Highway Department (217-535-3070) for County Highways, or your township road commissioner for township roads.**

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE DURING FLOODING

Do not walk through flowing water. Drowning is the number one cause of flood related deaths, mostly during flash floods. Currents can be deceptive. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure the ground is still there.

Do not drive through a flooded area. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Don't drive around road barriers because the road or bridge may be washed out.

Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. The number two flood killer after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to your power company.

IF YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IS FLOODED

Have your electricity turned off by your power company. Some appliances, such as television sets, keep electrical charges even after they are unplugged. Don't use appliances or motors that have gotten wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned and dried.

Look out for animals, especially snakes. Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to poke and turn things over and scare away small animals.

Look before you step. After a flood the ground and floors are covered with debris, including broken bottles and nails.

Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud will be slippery.

Have your gas turned off by your power company or gas supplier and be alert for gas leaks.

Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns, or open flames unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area ventilated.



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