



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Debris Removal, Flood Safety Reminder Issued Due to Forecast of Heavy Rains, Flooding

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 23, 2018) - With flooding on the Ohio River predicted to reach its highest level since 1997, the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet and state Emergency Management officials want residents to be aware of multiple flood warnings for central and northern Kentucky, specifically including the Ohio River and its tributaries.

The Ohio River is predicted to crest above 59 feet, which puts it in the high moderate flooding category. Ohio River flooding levels can be found here: <https://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=iln&gage=ccno1>. Flood stage is 52 feet. The river crested at nearly 65 feet in 1997.

With 89,431 miles of rivers and streams, Kentucky is especially susceptible to flood events during sustained, heavy precipitation, especially when the ground is saturated, as it is now.

The Department for Environmental Protection would like to remind Kentucky's residents that flash flooding can occur anytime during these conditions. These are dangerous events and can be life threatening.

With flooding already in parts of southeastern Kentucky, please remember the following regarding floods and post-flood cleanup:

A flash flood watch is an advisory that heavy rains may result in flash flooding.

If the National Weather Service issues a watch for your area:

Listen to area radio and TV stations for National Weather Service warnings and reports. Get a weather radio, or install an app on your phone.

Prepare to move to safety.

If you are on a road, watch for flooding at dips, bridges and low areas.

A flash flood warning advises that flash flooding is occurring or is imminent in a specified area. If a warning is issued for your area:

Act quickly; you may have only minutes.

Don't try to drive through water of unknown depth. If your car stalls in rising water, abandon it immediately and seek higher ground.

Be especially careful at night, when flood dangers are harder to recognize.

Turn around; don't drown.

After the flash flood watch or warning is canceled, stay tuned to radio or TV or your weather app. General flooding may come later in streams and rivers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than half of all flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is driven into hazardous floodwater. Many of the deaths occur as automobiles are swept downstream. It takes just 12 inches of rushing water to carry away a small car, while two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles. It is NEVER safe to drive or walk into floodwaters. These types of drownings are often preventable, but too many people continue to drive around the barriers that warn you the road is flooded.

The next highest percentage of flood-related deaths is due to walking into or near floodwaters. People underestimate the force and power of water. A mere six inches of fast-moving floodwater can knock over an adult.

If general flooding occurs, water treatment plants and wastewater treatment plants could experience problems or could even flood themselves. Have a supply of bottled water on hand in advance. If a boil-water advisory or notice is issued and you don't have bottled water, bring water to a boil for 10 minutes before using it for drinking or cooking. Stay away from streams that may be contaminated by untreated sewage.

The Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection would like to remind everyone that there are specific guidelines for proper disposal of woody and vegetative debris left in the aftermath of severe storms. For storm debris, Kentuckians should contact their local solid waste coordinator to find out if debris will be picked up curbside or if debris must be taken to a designated location. A list of coordinators is online at the department's Division of Waste Management site <http://waste.ky.gov/RLA/Documents/Solid%20Waste%20Coordinators%208-25-10.pdf>.

For more information, please see the Storm Debris Fact Sheet at <http://dca.ky.gov/DCA%20Resource%20Document%20Library/StormDebris070816.pdf>.

Recycling is the preferred disposal method for many kinds of debris. Local governments are strongly encouraged to recycle debris by shredding or chipping for reuse as mulch. Those lacking the equipment should consider commercial shredders or seek help from other cities and counties.

If recycling is not feasible, cities or counties should identify staging areas where storm debris can be temporarily stored or burned. At a minimum, staging areas must be well away from residences and businesses. They also must be out of floodplains and away from sinkholes and drainage channels.

Kentucky restricts open burning. Burning is only permitted in limited circumstances and under specific conditions. More details are online at DEP's Division for Air Quality site <http://air.ky.gov/Pages/OpenBurning.aspx>.

Please be safe and use good judgment with floodwater and storm debris