

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

With spring approaching, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and State Farm each released reminders to residents in preparing for seasonal flooding.

Those warnings are timely, because last week's abundant rain and snow created déjà vu for residents of Kenton Heights and Perkins County homeowners on north Highway 61.

Nearly 1.15 inches of moisture in the form of rain and snow fell between March 8-10, creating dangerous travel and miserable conditions for calving.

The amount of precipitation on saturated ground with frost still present underneath made for quick runoff and potential for flooding in many areas around the state.

In southwest Nebraska, water pooled in low spots such as near the homestead of the Humphrey family along Highway 61 south of the Trinity Church road, as well as near the Grant Golf Course and Kenton Heights where property owners watched water rise dangerously close to their backyards.

Information released by FEMA urges residents to become aware of flood risks and to begin preparing for the possibility of seasonal flooding.

Make a Plan

Make a family emergency plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.

Get Informed

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a flood hazard

- *Flood Watch*: Flooding is possible. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information
- *Flash Flood Watch*: Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground; listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.
- *Flood Warning*: Flooding is occurring or will occur soon; if advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- *Flash Flood Warning*: A flash flood is occurring; seek higher ground on foot immediately.

Flood Preparedness at Home

Make sure downspouts carry water several feet from your house to a well-drained area.

About 2,500 gallons of water will come from a 1,000 square foot roof with one foot of snow depth across the roof. This much water may cause problems if allowed to drain next to the house.

Move snow on the ground away from the house. Water from the snow may cause a wet basement if allowed to run down along the basement wall. If the ground is sloped one inch per foot near the house, moving the snow just three to five feet from the house will reduce problems.

Examine and clean your sump pump, if you have one. Test your sump pump by pouring water into the pit. Make sure the discharge hose carries the water several feet away from the house to a well-drained area. Also make sure that the pipe is on sloped ground so it drains to prevent it from freezing.

Remove snow from around rural yards to minimize soft, wet soil conditions. Remember that a 20-foot diameter 10-foot high pile of snow contains about 2,600 gallons of water. Move the snow to well-drained areas.

Anchor any fuel tanks. An unanchored tank in your basement can be torn free by floodwaters and the broken supply line can contaminate your basement. An unanchored tank outside can be swept downstream, where it can damage other houses.

Have a licensed electrician raise electric components (switches, sockets, circuit breakers and wiring) at least 12 inches above your home's projected flood elevation.

Place the furnace and water heater on masonry blocks or concrete at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.

If your washer and dryer are in the basement, elevate them on masonry or pressure-treated lumber at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.

Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family.

Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be the "family contact" in case your family is separated

during a flood. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of this contact person.

Call 1-888-379-9531 (TTY: 800-427-5593) or visit www.FloodSmart.gov to learn more about potential flood risks, flood insurance and how to prepare for floods.

Tips from State Farm

Before a flood:

- Learn how to shut off all utilities.
- Secure shelves and water heaters to nearby walls.
- Raise electrical system components.
- Consider installing check valves in your plumbing to prevent flood water backup.
- Collect emergency building supplies, such as plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber, hammer, nails, saw, pry bar, shovels and sandbags.
- Be aware of weather conditions that could prompt flooding.
- Listen to local broadcasts for emergency information and evacuate immediately if told to do so.

- Organize an evacuation plan and establish an emergency meeting place should your family get separated.
- Park, lock and leave vehicles at a higher elevation.

During a flood:

- Never walk or drive through rushing flood waters.
- Avoid rising waters, storm drains and sewers. Move to higher ground.
- Never enter buildings surrounded by flood waters.
- Stay away from downed power lines and electrical wires.
- Keep children and pets away from flood water.