

Flood Preparation

For the past few years, California has been experiencing a drought, resulting in very few storms during the rainy months. However, some of these storms have been fairly intense. The upcoming rainy season has been labeled by many weather experts, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as an El Nino year, which brings with it an expectation of heavier, longer lasting storms. With the coming of these types of rain events, they bring with them the very real possibility of flooding to creeks, ditches and even to neighborhood streets and properties.

As the rainy season begins, residents should check to be sure that they're prepared for these flood possibilities. Be aware that standard homeowner's insurance policies do not cover losses caused by floods or mudslides. Property owners can protect against potential flood damage by purchasing flood insurance and by preparing a family disaster plan. For property owners who currently possess flood insurance, be sure to inventory and photograph your home's contents and put important papers and insurance policies in a safe place. Some areas in Cupertino, such as properties along Calabazas Creek and Stevens Creek, are at increased risks for flooding. Visit FloodSmart.gov, or call the Cupertino Public Works Department at (408) 777-3354 to better understand your flooding risks. Floodsmart.gov will provide you information on your flood zone, as well as options regarding the purchase of flood insurance.

Flood protection, as with all natural disasters, is a hazard to people and property. Prepare for emergencies accordingly by creating a family disaster plan for your family that includes a designated place where you can rendezvous after an evacuation order is issued.

The city provides the following services to help residents prepare for potential flooding:

1. Residents can pick-up sandbags from various Santa Clara Valley Water District sites located throughout Santa Clara County. Check www.valleywater.org/servuces/sandbagsites.aspx for further information on sandbag locations.
2. Residents can find out if their property is in a flood zone by searching FloodSmart.gov online, or by visiting or calling the Cupertino Public Works Department. The Public Works Department also offers elevation certificates for new buildings constructed in the floodplain.
3. Contact the Cupertino Building Department to get a permit before you build. The City's Building Department also has a booklet called "What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor". Booklets are available at the downstairs counter at City Hall, or you can download the pamphlet at http://www.cslb.ca.gov/About_Us/Library/Guides_And_Publications/ .
4. City Staff can assist with onsite flooding and drainage issues. They can provide you with practical drainage information, such as directing your roof downspouts away from your house, to a more site specific response to drainage issues. Please call (408) 777-3354 to discuss your concerns regarding these items.

5. Other information on flood preparedness is available on the Cupertino website at www.cupertino.org/emergency.
6. Additional flood protection information and assistance can be obtained on the FEMA website at www.fema.gov.
7. The Cupertino Library also holds publications for flood preparedness.

How we can work together to protect Cupertino from flooding:

- The city's storm drainage system is composed of street gutters, the storm drain sewer inlets (at street corners), and the pipes that connect the inlets to local creeks. This system drains street runoff into the creeks and channels on the valley floor.
- Residents can assist the city and help protect their immediate neighborhood from localized flooding by sweeping gutters regularly, placing swept material in the garbage, and checking that nearby storm drain grates are not covered with leaves or litter. Residents should abide by street sweeping/no parking signs to allow the city to keep the gutters clean and the storm drain system flowing. The city routinely sweeps the gutters in residential areas twice a month and in commercial areas once a week.
- In the fall, before the rains start, a city contractor vacuums out city storm drain inlets, and checks for any evidence of hazardous materials in the drains. This cleaning prevents any illegally dumped materials that may be sitting in the inlets from washing into our creeks with the first rains.
- It is illegal to dump anything into a creek or a storm drain. Residents can report dumping incidents to the City by calling (408) 777-3269 during business hours and 911 after hours and on weekends.
- Please notify the City if you observe excess debris and trash in streams and ditches.