

7 Storm Preparation and Response

Surface flooding as a result of heavy storms may cause damage to public infrastructure, residences, businesses, and other structures. Water resources, wastewater systems, and utility services may be compromised due to intense storms. A rapid response to mitigate hazards and expedite recovery requires strategic coordination among District agencies and service-delivery partners, as well as activation of reliable communication systems for internal operations and public information management.

The Task Force has provided an overview of guidance for citizen preparedness and flood protection, community outreach and communication, agency coordination (of services before, during, and after the emergency event), mitigation of environmental and health hazards, and management of stress associated with persistent flooding.

7.1 Citizen Storm/Flood Preparedness

The effectiveness of the District's storm response strategy is connected to the preparedness capacity of its citizens, particularly those who reside in flood-prone areas. The District strives to build the public's awareness of actions that can be taken before, during, and after severe storms to help mitigate the impact of flooding and sewage overflow. Through preparedness assistance, the District can help citizens reduce the risk of health and safety hazards and damage to property.

Emergency management experts advise people to prepare to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. While preparing for a flood is very important, residents and businesses must also be ready to handle the aftermath of the storm. Preparedness guidance has been organized around four themes that provide guidance on what actions people should take. Through community outreach and education, the District offers guidance of the following actions:

- Activate Family Emergency Plan
- "Flood-Proof" Structure and Protect Personal Property
- Monitor Weather and Public Notifications
- Assess Damage and Clean and Disinfect Immediately

Table 7-1 provides a one-page flyer of preparedness actions that are organized according to the before, during, and after phases of a storm. The one-page reference format can be easily mounted in the common areas of residences.

7.1.1 Activate Family Emergency Plan

7.1.1.1 72 Hours of Supplies

Each household should have 72 hours-worth of supplies stored at all times during the rainy season. Refresh the emergency supply kit to ensure there are enough supplies to sustain each member of the household, including pets. Organize supplies including a first-aid kit, essential medicines, emergency food and water, can opener, flashlights, extra batteries, and portable battery-operated radio, into a duffel bag, small suitcase, or large plastic container for easy access.

- Special Needs Populations: Consider the requirements of young children, the elderly, and those with special needs. Inform local authorities about any medical equipment needs, immobile elderly

or bedridden people, or anyone with a disability. Individuals with compromised immune systems or with underlying illnesses, as well as the elderly are a greater risk of contracting infections. If necessary, plan to move people with special needs to a facility or residence with a more stable environment.

- Non-English Speaking or Limited English Speaking Populations: Emergency guidelines and other communications will be available in Spanish, French, Chinese, Amharic, Vietnamese and Korean.

7.1.1.2 Communication

Update the family communication plan with current telephone numbers, including a long-distance relative or friend to help coordinate communication. When the local system is jammed, it is often easier to call long-distance. Confirm telephone and website details for utility and communication companies, insurance agents, and other emergency contacts.

7.1.1.3 Disable Home Utilities Training

Teach family members how to turn off gas, electricity, and water. Local authorities may request that utilities be disabled to ensure home safety.

7.1.2 “Flood-proof” Structure and Protect Personal Property

7.1.2.1 Stock Emergency Building Materials

Stock emergency building materials like plywood, plastic sheeting, lumber, hammer, nails, sandbags, and shovels to temporarily waterproof and help minimize damage caused by floodwaters. As necessary, openings can be blocked to reduce water seepage.

7.1.2.2 Clean Debris

Clean out storm drains, removing any debris, leaves, and litter to ensure proper drainage during heavy rain. Ensure that gutter downspouts are directed away from the house to reduce water ponding at the basement entryway. Install a splash block (available at hardware stores) at foundation wall to divert water away from the house.

7.1.2.3 Prepare Sandbags

Stack sandbags at doors and windows opening to the outside to prevent floodwaters from entering. To reinforce the sandbag wall, place a tarp over the entire barrier. Sandbags should be reused. There are several ways to dispose of sandbags that have outgrown their useful life. If sandbags become contaminated, they may be placed at the curb with other flood-damaged items for collection by DPW. Wear rubber gloves when removing used sandbags after a flood. Clean, washed sand can be added to gardens as a soil amendment. Sand should not be placed in garbage receptacles or poured into storm drains or catch basins.

7.1.2.4 Elevate furnishings

Use concrete blocks to raise furniture that cannot be relocated to upper floors. Move irreplaceable personal possessions to higher levels of the home to avoid damage. Use waterproof containers if possible. Remove carpets and rugs.

7.1.2.5 Prepare for Outages

In anticipation of power outages, adjust the thermostat on refrigerators and freezers to the coolest possible temperature. Open only when absolutely necessary and close quickly.

7.1.3 Monitor Weather and Public Notifications

7.1.3.1 DC Alerts

Stay tuned to local broadcast radio and television stations that are part of the Emergency Alert System to get emergency messages. Weather systems are unpredictable and storm conditions can change rapidly. Listen to a **battery-operated radio or television** for updated information. Ensure that you have three days-worth of fresh batteries for each device.

ALERT DC - To receive updates via e-mail and/or text message with up-to-the-minute information on severe weather, traffic, closings and more, sign up to receive messages from **ALERT DC** at <https://textalert.ema.dc.gov>.

7.1.3.2 Traffic Advisories

Be attentive to traffic advisories. Storms, heavy rain, and flooding may warrant street and road closures. News alerts and DDOT's Variable Message Boards will announce rerouting instructions.

Do not attempt to drive over flooded roads – “turn around - don't drown.” Abandon stalled vehicles immediately and seek higher ground.

7.1.4 Assess Damage - Clean and Disinfect Immediately

7.1.4.1 Contamination Precaution

Take proper precautions to limit or prevent exposure to contamination. Wear rain gear including rubber gloves and boots, goggles, and masks (to prevent inhalation of contaminants). Avoid direct contact with sewage materials – be particularly careful of exposure to the face and eyes.

7.1.4.2 Garbage and Debris

Sort damaged contents to be repaired or discarded. Materials such as carpet padding, upholstered furniture, mattresses and pillows, medicine and medical supplies, stuffed animals, and food that have been submerged in stormwater or sewage should be discarded. Take debris outside to improve indoor air quality. DPW will send trucks into Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park up to five days after the storm ends to collect these items so residents do not have to schedule a bulk pick-up for large materials and/or multiple items. The longer damaged materials remain in the home, the greater the potential for illness and irreparable damage to property.

7.1.4.3 Clean and Disinfect

Clean and disinfect non-porous items such as furnishings, walls, and floors to restore to good condition. Dehumidifiers, wet/dry vacuums, fans, and circulated air will be helpful in restoring dry conditions and preventing build-up of mold and mildew.

7.1.4.4 Insurance

Before a storm, invite FEMA to community meeting(s) to learn about the requirements associated with flood insurance provided through the federal government. Contact your insurance agent before damages or losses occur to determine insurance products that are available to meet your needs. Sewer backup coverage is available, but homeowners must determine exactly what is covered. Maintain a list of valuables and photograph or videotape the home's contents.

Damage caused by floodwaters can be covered by homeowners insurance. Contact an insurance agent and explain your specific needs. If a policy already is in place, have the agent walk through the policy with you to make sure you understand it clearly.

After a storm, contact your insurance agent as quickly as possible to report losses. Use a pre-disaster home inventory, with purchase amount and date, to describe damaged or destroyed property. Take photographs or video of the damage to help with the claim and assist the adjuster in an evaluation. Even without coverage for flood damage, the home insurance company will be able to determine if any damaged property is eligible for replacement.



Table 7-1
**Flood Preparedness:
 Before, During, and After the Storm**



Having an emergency **plan of action** to put into effect can help decrease the potential of injury, reduce property damage, and jump-start the recovery process.

BEFORE THE STORM	DURING THE STORM	AFTER THE STORM
Create an emergency supply kit; Basics: non-perishable food, bottled water, manual can opener, pet food, first aid, prescription medicines, cash & credit cards, extra clothing, blankets, auto/home/renter insurance, and other important legal documents	Get weather updates using a battery-powered radio; emergency management officials will announce required public actions – take these messages seriously and act immediately	Throw away food, water and medicine that may have been in contact with floodwater and sewage
Develop an emergency communication plan; choose a long-distance relative or friend to serve as a contact (often it’s easier to call long-distance than local contacts)	Fill bathtubs, sinks and jugs with clean water in case city water becomes unavailable	Stay off the streets during clean-up; listen to radio and TV for advisories
Stack sandbags at openings to prevent floodwaters from entering	If electricity goes off, unplug or switch off major appliances to avoid a surge when power is restored	Be aware of outdoor hazards. Watch out for loose or dangling power lines, and immediately report downed power lines to PEPCO 1-877-737-2662
Clean out storm drains, removing any debris, leaves, and litter	Avoid contact with floodwaters that may be polluted with raw sewage, bacteria, motor oil, chemicals, and other contaminants	Watch for electrical shorts in the home; don’t use appliances or motors that have gotten wet (thoroughly clean and recondition before putting back into service)
Load battery-operated flashlights, radios, and TV with fresh batteries (have extra batteries for 3 days of use)	Do not attempt to drive over flooded roads – “turn around - don’t drown;” abandon stalled vehicles immediately and seek higher ground	Contact insurance agent as quickly as possible to report losses (it takes time to process a large number of claims after a disaster)
Move furnishings and irreplaceable personal possessions to the highest level of your home; place valuables and important papers into waterproof containers	Direct medical, police, and fire emergency calls to 911; use 311 for civil service assistance, including reports of downed trees, road flooding, and debris removal requests.	Have upholstery, rugs, and carpets professionally cleaned (detergent & wet/dry vacuuming may be useful if water damage is limited and there’s been no exposure to sewage); disinfect walls, floors, and other non-porous surfaces
Create property inventory with photos and approximate value of each item; store with insurance policy number, insurance agent’s telephone number in emergency kit	Do not evacuate during the storm unless instructed; take refuge in a small interior room without windows	Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park residents may place damaged items, including sandbags that cannot continue being used, at the curb to be collected by DPW.

7.2 Flood Protection & Homeowner Toolkit

The intent of the Flood Protection & Homeowner Toolkit is to help educate and inform citizens and businesses about how to prepare for and recover from flooding events. The information contained in the Toolkit is a comprehensive compilation of instructional guidelines, contact information, and fact sheets from District agencies and other credible organizations that covers pre-flooding preparation and mitigation strategies, during-event news sources, and post-event recovery information. The Toolkit is broad in nature to allow the user flexibility to apply and adapt information that may be unique to his/her situation. Citizen action is often contingent on reliable information and guidance that is easily accessible.

The first component of the Flooding Toolkit is agency contact information. Table 7-2 provides a list of agencies that play a significant role in pre-disaster, during disaster, and post-disaster assistance. Table 7-2 contains a description of agency services during a flooding event, a phone number to call, a Twitter handle to follow, and websites with event updates.

The second component of the Homeowner Flooding Toolkit is a comprehensive collection of flood resource information that can be used throughout the flooding event. Table 7-3 includes a description of the resource, responsible agency, and a website for users to gather information.

Table 7-2. Agency Contact Information



Flood Protection Toolkit: Agency/Organization Contacts



FLOOD PROTECTION TOOLKIT				
Agency Contact Information				
Agency	Description	Phone Number	Twitter	Website
Citywide Call Center (ALL)	Information on District agencies and services; public source for service requests	311		http://311.dc.gov/
DC Water	Clogged catch basins or sewer lines; Backwater Valve Program	202-612-3400	@dcwater	http://www.dewater.com/report_problem/
DC Department of the Environment (DDOE)	State Flood Management; Rain Barrel Program	202-535-2600 (or 311)	@DDOE_DC	http://ddoe.dc.gov/
DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)	Overall flood management assistance	202-727-6161 (or 311)	@DC_HSEMA	http://hsema.dc.gov/
Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)	Public safety	911	@DCPoliceDept	http://mpdc.dc.gov/
PEPCO	24-hour power outage hotline (report problems & check status)	1-877-737-2662	@PepcoConnect	http://www.pepco.com/home/
Washington Gas	Gas leaks and gas outages	1-800-752-7520 (or 911)	-	http://www.washgas.com/
DC Department of Health (DOH)	Mold; overall health and safety concerns, waterborne illnesses	202-442-9557 (or 311)	-	http://doh.dc.gov/
DC Department of Transportation (DDOT)	Obstructions in streets/alleys; traffic control and signals	202-673-6813 (or 311)	@DDOTDC	http://ddot.dc.gov/DC/DDOT/
DC Department of Public Works (DPW)	Sandbags; solid waste, street sweeping/cleaning, debris removal	202-673-6833 (or 311)	@DCDPW	http://dpw.dc.gov/DC/DPW/
DC Department of Mental Health (DMH)	Stress from disaster remediation	202-673-7440 (or 311)	-	http://dmh.dc.gov/



Table 7-3: Flood Protection Toolkit: Preparedness, Protection and Recovery Resources

Flood Protection Toolkit: Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery References



FLOOD PROTECTION TOOLKIT			
Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery References			
SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	Website
Cleaning Up Safely After A Disaster	Fact sheet for “Cleaning Up Safely After A Disaster” dealing with the following areas: reentering buildings, general safety measures, carbon monoxide exposure, mold and clean-up, electrical issues, hazardous materials issues, hygiene and infectious disease Issues, and water issues.	Center for Disease Control (CDC)	http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.asp
DC Alerts	Alert DC is the District’s citizen emergency notification system, which gives you official emergency information to help you prepare for and respond to emergencies.	Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)	Phone: https://textalert.ema.dc.gov/index.php?Ccheck=1 Web: http://72hours.dc.gov TV: WRC-4, WTTG-5, WJLA-7/8, WUSA-9 Radio: WTOP 103.5 FM/ 103.9 FM; WAMU 88.5 FM; WHUR 96.3 FM; WASH 97.1 FM
Debris Removal	Resource for debris removal from roadways, alleys, sidewalks	Department of Public Works	www.dpw.dc.gov
Streets, Sidewalks, and Alleys	Coordination of roadway, sidewalks and alley repair. Maintenance of trees in the public right-of-way (including removal of downed trees).	District Department of Transportation (DDOT)	http://ddot.dc.gov/DC/DDOT/Services/Streets+and+Sidewalks?nav=3&vgnextrefresh=1
Disaster Preparedness Manual	HSEMA’s <i>Disaster Preparedness Manual</i> contains detailed information for the public on what to do before, during, and after a disaster.	Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)	http://hsema.dc.gov/publication/disaster-preparedness-manual-2011
Emergency Go Kit	<i>Make An Emergency Go Kit</i> -When disaster strikes, it's too late to prepare. Be prepared to help your family through the first 72 hours of an emergency or disaster.	Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)	http://hsema.dc.gov

FLOOD PROTECTION TOOLKIT			
Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery References			
SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	Website
Emergency Response Plan (Washington, DC)	Function-based plan that outlines the tasks that support emergency response in the District of Columbia and provides a framework for coordination among District, local, and federal agencies. The Plan delineates role of DC agencies and provides guidance to emergency responders.	Emergency Response Plan (Washington, DC)	http://hsema.dc.gov/publication/district-response-plan
Family Emergency Preparedness Guide	Be Ready DC -Emergencies can occur quickly and without warning. The best way to keep yourself and your family safe is to be prepared before an emergency strikes.	Family Emergency Preparedness Guide	http://hsema.dc.gov/publication/hsema-preparedness-guide
Family Plan Guide (HSEMA)	Following the steps outlined by HSEMA, these easy steps will make a simple plan that will help your family take control during an emergency.	Family Plan Guide (HSEMA)	http://makeaplan.dc.gov/login.aspx
Family Planning and Preparedness (Red Cross)	Tips for caring for specific members of your household: children, people with disabilities, seniors, and pets.	Family Planning and Preparedness (Red Cross)	http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family
Flood Management	DDOE technical assistance for property owners and other interested parties on issues such as the NFIP, floodplain management, flood insurance, floodplain development requirements, floodplain mapping, and flood mitigation.	Flood Management	http://ddoe.dc.gov/service/floodplain-management
Flood Map Mobile App	Smart phone apps are available for mobile phones that can help relay messages on flood risk in the context of the user's location on demand, enabling users to have quick and easy access to information about flood information.	Flood Map Mobile App	

FLOOD PROTECTION TOOLKIT

Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery References

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	Website
Flood Smart Toolkits	Resources include fact sheets, messaging, outreach planning support, and other information that emergency managers and other stakeholders can use to address flood risks, promote flood insurance, and communicate changes in flood hazard maps.	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	http://www.floodsmart.gov/toolkits/
Flood Zone Determination Tool	Resource for DC residents to identify the flood risk-zone for their property.	District Department of the Environment (DDOE)	http://ddoe.dc.gov/floodplainmap
Flooding General Guidelines	HSEMA has provided General Guidelines for what to do during a flood event.	Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency(HSEMA)	http://hsema.dc.gov/page/flood
Guide to Preventing Home Flooding	Guide to keep the water out, keep the water away, and keep your systems working.	DC Water	http://www.dewater.com/workzones/bloomingdale/flood_prevention_web.pdf
Guide to Preventing Sewer Backups	A guide of pre/during/post-storm contacts for preventing sewer backups.	DC Water	http://www.dewater.com/workzones/bloomingdale/preventing_sewer_backups.pdf
Hurricane Preparedness	Guidelines prepared by HSEMA covering what is a hurricane, what should be done in preparation, and what should be done during a hurricane event.	Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)	http://hsema.dc.gov/page/hurricane
Insurance-Homeowner and Renters	After Storm: Five Reminders About Your Insurance Coverage (Compiled by DISB and National Association of Insurance Commissioners)	Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB)	http://disb.dc.gov/node/368072

FLOOD PROTECTION TOOLKIT			
Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery References			
SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	Website
Insurance Options for Sewer Backup	Insurance guidance for flooding/sewer backup events.	Insurance Information Institute	http://www.iii.org/press_releases/insure-against-the-risk-of-sewer-backup.html
Mold	A comprehensive resource that covers how to mitigate and remove mold, prepared by DDOE.	District Department of the Environment (DDOE)	http://hc.rrc.dc.gov/hc/cwp/view,a,1271,q,463193.asp
Mold Clean-Up	List of recommendations, guidelines, and educational materials dealing with mold clean-up, based on best practices.	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/
Planning and Preparedness (FEMA)	Internet resource to assist all stakeholders, 'Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed,' that pertains to all disasters.	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	www.ready.gov
Public Health Disaster Preparedness	"All-hazard" disaster preparedness guidance regarding epidemiology, the Public Health Lab, and response readiness activities.	Department of Health (DOH)	http://doh.dc.gov/service/all-hazards-public-health-disaster-preparedness
Rain Barrel/Cistern Program	DDOE RiverSmart Homes District-wide program offers incentives to homeowners interested in reducing stormwater pollution from their properties.	District Department of the Environment	http://ddoe.dc.gov/service/riversmart-homes-rain-barrels
Sandbags	Factsheets on the proper use of sandbags.	Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)	http://www.dinobags.com/how-to-use-sandbags.pdf
Stormwater Management	Primer on stormwater: why it is a problem and what can be done about it from a private and public perspective.	District Department of the Environment (DDOE)	http://ddoe.dc.gov/stormwater
Stress	Depression and anxiety are normal reactions to abnormal times or stress. DMH is a valuable resource in dealing with stress.	Department of Mental Health (DMH)	http://www.dmh.dc.gov/dmh/cwp/view,a,3,q,642484.asp

7.3 Community Outreach & Communication

A systematic communication process is essential to the District's response and recovery strategy. Flooding as a result of severe storms will generally trigger activation of the Hazard Specific Plan/Urban Floods, which results in integrated communications to be delivered by the Mayor, based on pre-storm, during storm, and post-storm operations of DC government agencies, the National Guard, regional utilities, volunteer organizations, and weather services.

7.3.1 Objectives

The Task Force has established a Community Outreach and Communication Plan that outlines the strategic dissemination and coordination of information to residents and businesses related to a storm event. The Plan's key objectives are to:

- Provide information to help District residents continually educate themselves about the importance of emergency preparedness.
- Encourage development of an emergency action plan, including an Emergency Go Kit, with the appropriate steps to survive major disasters.
- Establish effective mechanisms for information dissemination before, during, and after a flooding event, in order to help mitigate safety hazards and property damage, and to ensure responsive service delivery.

Standard messaging, some of which will be pre-scripted to enable quick-response distribution, will include:

- Actions to take before, during, and after the storm.
- Educate yourself and your family about the importance of being prepared.
- Make plans in advance of flooding for pets, insurance, property structural issues, and what should happen if you are out-of-town, etc.
- Take the necessary actions to ensure the plan will work, such as installing a sump pump, backwater valve, acquiring sandbags, and placing important papers in safety deposit box.
- Identify and test communications tools – TV's, radios, telephones, computers, etc. – and make sure plenty of fresh batteries are available.
- Keep up with weather predictions to know when your plan will need to be activated.
- When to use 311 vs. 911 for best response.
- Utility shut –off (when appropriate).
- Emergency contact numbers for utilities, family, neighbors, friends.



Resident uses sandbags to mitigate flood damage

The primary recipients of the messages include:

1. Residents of the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park neighborhoods
2. Community/civic associations/social service/public safety/volunteer organizations within Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park
3. Elected officials specific to these neighborhoods
4. Local businesses, including utilities, within these neighborhoods
5. Relevant DC government agencies, including public and public charter schools
6. Media

The Plan identifies the core channels of communication, which will serve as mechanisms for providing alerts, guidance and updates throughout the emergency event. The applicability of each communication channel is related to its outreach capacity and the level of urgency communicated by the message(s) to be delivered. For example, “Is your family ready to weather a flood? Go to hsema.dc.gov for tips.”



Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Agency.
 Webpage for flooding events is located at:
<http://hsema.dc.gov/page/flood>

Core channels of communication include:

- Media, including The Weather Channel
- AlertDC
- Social media, including neighborhood listservs, government agencies’ Twitter, and Facebook accounts
- Agency websites – In the case of an emergency, people should go to either DC.gov or HSEMA.dc.gov.
- Door-to-door flyers
- Door hangers
- Community meetings
- Public signage, e.g., signage posted to lampposts in these two neighborhoods. Billboards
- Direct mail
- Bill inserts
- Points of sale bulletin boards, including neighborhood supermarkets, stores, restaurants, bars, etc.
- Community fairs and government-sponsored events
- Speakers bureau of government, utility, commercial and community representatives
- Robocalls
- Agency publications

To ensure that information is reliably delivered to residents, the Task Force distributed a communications questionnaire to subscribers of the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park listservs to determine how residents on these listservs receive their weather-related news. The responses will be used to broaden the list of communication channels, as necessary.

7.3.2 General Timeframes

- Initial widespread outreach about the importance of planning – build on “September is Preparedness Month” model and lessons learned
- Produce before, during, and after-storm messages that can be distributed through appropriate channels of communication upon approval of the Community Outreach and Communications Plan
- Initiate specific storm communications within 24 hours of weather report, i.e., advise public that storm weather is approaching, and note precautions to be taken
- During storm, advise public of sources of storm information
- Post-storm/recovery; advise public of services available to recover from the storm

7.3.3 Pre-Storm Community Outreach and Communications: Education is the Starting Point

Pre-storm communications precedes a weather report of an approaching storm. Preparing the public to take the appropriate actions in case of an emergency starts well in advance of a storm through ongoing educational activities, especially in light of the District’s burgeoning population of people from other jurisdictions who may be unfamiliar with the need for emergency preparedness.

The Homeland Security and Emergency Management Services Agency is the point of contact for educating residents. HSEMA provides training opportunities, information about emergency preparedness and public awareness materials about what to do in a major disaster. hsema.dc.gov has step-by-step instructions that residents may follow to educate themselves and make advanced preparations for themselves, their families, pets, homes, etc. To coincide with National Preparedness Month, HSEMA conducts “Whole Community” ward-based trainings in September to familiarize residents with actions they can take to prepare for an emergency. Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park were among the neighborhoods that participated in a community outreach initiative.

7.3.4 Pre-Storm Community Outreach and Communications: When the Weather Services Predict a Severe Storm

HSEMA, through Alert DC, will send messages to its subscribers with the most current National Weather Service prediction for a storm and its potential impact on the District. One can sign up for Alert DC at <https://textalert.ema.dc.gov/>.



Alert DC is Located at: <https://textalert.ema.dc.gov/>

The Department of Public Works is the primary operations agency for the Hazard Specific Plans for Urban Floods and Hurricanes. DPW coordinates the operational agencies’ functions and coordinates communications about the operations with the Mayor’s

Office of Communications, HSEMA, and other operational agencies as necessary. Pre-storm communications take the form of press releases and Facebook and Twitter messages, which advise the public about what to expect from the weather, what actions to take, if sandbags will be distributed at what locations, and where to go for further information. Messaging is distributed citywide. For the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park neighborhoods, messaging can be made available to community groups/volunteer organizations for door-to-door distribution.

7.3.5 During the Storm Community Outreach and Communications: How Are Residents Managing? What New Information Needs to be Conveyed and How?

Pre-scripted messages, as well as messages specific to the event, will be developed to keep the public informed of operations underway that address the storm's effects on residents and property.

Communicating the impact of changes in weather patterns, traffic congestion, street closures, and the locations of downed trees and power lines, for instance, is critical for public safety. Drawing from the array of communication channels described above, appropriate messages will be distributed to residents in a timely manner following the approval process established for each storm event.

7.3.6 Post-storm/Recovery Community Outreach and Communications: Assisting in the Aftermath

Following a severe storm or flooding event, residents have common questions. How can I safely handle clean-up? Which agencies provide assistance when downed wires and trees block the roads? Are there support systems to help cope with the stress of recovery and loss? Again, pre-scripted messages are the starting point as well as having community-based people handle on-the-ground message dissemination. Additional messaging specific to the event will be developed and disseminated as needs dictate.

Recovery guidance on various topics is available through District agencies, including property restoration, mold remediation, removal of downed trees from the public right-of-way, disposal of contaminated or spoiled food, and bulk collection of damaged household goods. Disaster mental health services are available to help residents cope with the stress and anxiety associated with emergency events.

7.4 Agency Coordination of Storm Response

7.4.1.1 Key Government Agencies, Utilities

These agencies will provide operational and administrative support in the event of a flood emergency that is commensurate with the severity of the emergency.

1. Executive Office of the Mayor
2. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency
3. Office of Unified Communications
4. DC Water
5. Department of Public Works
6. Department of Transportation
7. Department of Health
8. Department of Mental Health
9. Serve DC

10. Office of Neighborhood Engagement
11. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
12. Department of General Services
13. Department of Human Services
14. Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking
15. Metropolitan Police Department
16. Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services
17. Office of Contracting and Procurement
18. Community-based social services/volunteer/religious organizations
19. National Weather Service
20. DC National Guard
21. PEPCO
22. Washington Gas
23. Verizon
24. Sprint/Nextel
25. AT&T
26. T Mobile
27. Comcast

7.4.1.2 Direction and Control

The District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) maintains the District Response Plan (DRP) – Urban Floods Hazard Specific Plan (HSP). This document provides guidance to primary and support District government agencies in the event of a flood. It identifies the roles of key agencies and prescribes a course of action for emergency response personnel to manage disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Mayor is responsible for overall direction and control of flood mitigation, preparation, response and recovery activities. The Mayor will work with the HSEMA Director and designated senior officials to coordinate implementation of the HSP, for the specific incident. The day-to-day management of functional activities is conducted within the purview of the Operations Directorate and the 24-hour Emergency Operations Control (EOC) functions. In the case of emergency management, for the Urban Floods Plan, the Department of Public Works serves as the primary agency for operations oversight. Generally, all requests for District resources or assistance are normally routed through the HSEMA EOC through the EOC/Area Command.

When a flood event in the District of Columbia escalates to a severe magnitude, the Mayor may request federal disaster assistance. This request will only occur when the District government exhausts its resources, or anticipates that a flood will overwhelm response capabilities.

Emergency Management Operations

Given the propensity for flooding in the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park regions of the District of Columbia, Special Protective Measures will be instituted and activated, as necessary, by District agencies and quasi-governmental entities. The deployment of assets and personnel will be situational, primarily driven by the expectation of more than 1” of rain per hour for a period of time exceeding 1 hour.

- The **Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM)** Office of Communications coordinates public information, crisis communications and rumor control; and coordinates the dissemination of recorded messages or other guidance regarding protective actions through the Office of Unified Communications (311). Furthermore, the EOM manages deployment of its community services team staffed by personnel from the Office of Community Services and Serve DC. The Office of Communications utilizes social media services as well as other channels of communication to disseminate crisis messages. The Office of Communications may designate HSEMA to spearhead the public information effort in disseminating crisis messages.
- The **Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency** maintains 24-hour vigilance to monitor threats and provide situational awareness on natural, manmade and national security emergencies or disasters. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) monitors the National Weather Service, and where applicable, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) and other information sources for current weather conditions posing a threat to District of Columbia residents, businesses and visitors. The HSEMA Community Engagement Division, in coordination with other District response agencies, disseminates information to flood prone communities regarding preparedness, response and recovery efforts.
- The **Department of Public Works (DPW)** coordinates the District government’s advance preparations and emergency response for forecasted storms and hurricanes. The deployment of operational support resources is organized with the Department of Transportation (DDOT), Department of Health, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), and the DC Water and Sewer Authority.

Advance distribution of sandbags to residents, based on forecasts of heavy rainstorms and hurricanes is a DPW responsibility. DPW’s current sandbag distribution system consists of staging at RFK Stadium before a storm begins and sometimes during a storm to allow residents from across the city the opportunity to acquire free sandbags. DPW also has a localized distribution operation at its 201 Bryant Street NW site for residents of Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park. The sandbag distribution schedule and location are widely publicized through the media

While the standard practice has been to disperse five sandbags to residents, recent experience indicates that many homes need additional bags, to adequately minimize the flooding. Consequently, DPW plans to make more bags available. Its future plan is to drop off the number of sandbags requested or deemed appropriate for the property at the front steps of the residence. People will be responsible for placing the sandbags around the property and their storage.

DPW’s stormwater, sewage, and debris clean-up protocol, for incident response, requires that staff notification and equipment readiness are addressed before the event. As soon as the determination is made that staff can safely be deployed, the DPW response begins – usually within several hours of the ended event. Staffing and equipment deployed depends on the size, severity and nature of the event. The DPW focus is on debris removal in order to allow for passage of vehicles and pedestrians through streets, this is followed by alleyways. Vehicles and equipment that can be deployed for debris

(including small trees and branches, vehicles and other windblown items) removal, include trash compactor, trucks, front end loaders, mechanical street sweepers, dump trucks, flusher trucks, knuckle boom trucks, and power washers. Clearing sewage and waste, from the public right-of-way, can be achieved through judicious use (to minimize environmental hazards) of power washers on the sidewalks and flusher trucks in the streets.

DPW's other operational activities include special debris removal services, which included bulk trash pick-up – often on an extended schedule (e.g., throughout the week after a severe and damaging storm). Community disposal designations for food that spoiled during electricity outages can be established in targeted neighborhoods and/or centrally located facilities such as Ft. Totten Transfer Station, 4900 John F. McCormack Drive NE.

To ensure the efficient and expeditious response to hazards, DPW is able to deploy equipment and manpower to assist DDOT with removal of wind-damaged trees and branches that block the roadways and otherwise impede movement or reduce public safety. DPW tow trucks also may be put into service to remove vehicles blocking roadways. These services extend the operating capacity of DDOT.

Around-the-clock site visits throughout District neighborhoods, and sustained communication among responding units helps to ensure rapid positioning of resources in priority areas, as defined by conditions and urgency.

- The **Department of Transportation** (DDOT) deploys resources from its Transportation Operations Administration Street and Bridge Maintenance and Stormwater Management units to assess the potential impact of flooding on infrastructure. Public Space Regulatory inspectors and Urban Forestry teams survey neighborhoods to identify potential hazards, in advance of storms.

Transportation Management Control (TMC) monitors cameras to identify high water. DDOT provides hourly reporting from the TMC on existing conditions. The DDOT Director prepares briefings for the City Administrator, DPW Director, HSEMA Director, and regional partners. DDOT Communications Team coordinates public information delivery.

Variable Message Boards are activated to alert residents to potential high water, flooding, and road closures. Variable message signs are the safest means for notifying motorists of changes in traffic patterns and road conditions. In addition, DDOT will strategically install fixed mounted message signs, which are ultra-bright and highly legible. This new form of signage offers a variety of functions for any application: lane closures, high water, work zones, and more. One important way to alert motorists to high standing water is to install fixed mounted variable message boards along the corridors approaching the Rhode Island Corridor and to communicate messages to the boards through wireless technology. By using the wireless technology, the DDOT Traffic Management Center can communicate the message to the boards to alert motorists for detours and high water alerts without having to deploy boards every time there is a potential storm.

Roadway Operations Patrol Unit manages roadway emergencies and Traffic Control Officers detour traffic away from flooded areas, in coordination with MPD/FEMS. Generally, generators are set-up at major intersections, for major storm events, to avoid traffic signal disruption. As necessary, evening crews monitor the impacted areas and inform central dispatch of problems requiring immediate remedy, to keep communities safe.

A key DDOT responsibility is to ensure that construction sites are secure during the storm and to confirm readiness of equipment after the storm. Steel plates are also checked following storm. DDOT restores traffic signal, roadway lighting, alley lighting; installs roadway directional signs and removes frail and damaged trees in the public right-of-way. The Department provides operational support that supplements the capacity of DPW and DC Water.

- The **Department of Human Services (DHS)** shall maintain and inventory short- and long-term shelter sites available for immediate activation in the event of a flood emergency. Based on developing flood conditions, DHS shall collaborate with Emergency Support Functions 6 (Mass Care) and 8 (Health and Medical) support agencies to activate temporary (short-term) and/or long-term emergency shelter sites in strategic locations to service flood-affected communities.
- The **Department of Health (DOH)**, through its Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Administration (HEPRA) provides community outreach to inform the public of potential health threats, associated with flooding and sewage overflow. HEPRA distributes fliers addressing flood recover are distributed throughout the affected community. Residents receive information covering clean-up, water and food safety, prevention of mildew/mold growth, elimination of standing water, treatment of wounds, hand washing guidelines, damage to septic tanks, and HVAC systems. Health specialists conduct epidemiological surveillance, and respond to vector control and mosquitoes/West Nile Virus issues.
- **DC Water** shall dispatch crews and station staff 24/7 to mitigate interruptions in service by performing the following actions:
 - Conduct aggressive cleaning of catch basins across the District, but especially in flood-prone areas such as Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park.
 - Coordinating logistics to provide sandbags in Bloomingdale and other impacted areas.
 - Assigning water, sewer and fire hydrant crews, along with contractors and electricians, on standby for the duration of the storm.
 - Mobilizing portable generators and crews in case stormwater or drinking water pumping stations lose power.
 - Transporting in extra supplies and food for personnel who must remain at Blue Plains or a pumping station beyond an ordinary shift.



DC Water Crews Clean and Inspect Sewers

- In addition, DC Water will instruct customers to initiate preventive measures, which may include the following:
 - Check gutters and downspouts to ensure they are clear of debris.
 - Report clogged storm drains by calling (202) 612-3400.
 - Fill containers with tap water and freeze them, providing extra cooling capability in the event of a power outage.

DC Water conducts media interviews before, during and after the event. They remain in contact with the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, civic leaders, residents and businesses. Throughout the duration of the emergency event, community outreach is achieved by way of public meetings in targeted neighborhoods, distribution of information brochures and guides, website updates, and social media (e.g., Twitter and Facebook).

7.4.1.3 Special Protective Actions for the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park Areas

The Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park neighborhoods are susceptible to flooding, particularly when rainfall exceeds 1 inch per hour for a period of time longer than 1 hour. Based on the expectation of these conditions, the District will activate targeted services to mitigate the impact of flooding and support community recovery. These special protective actions include the following.

- DC Water will dispatch crews throughout the area of concern ensuring the catch basins remain free and clear of trash and other debris and that all pumps are functioning properly.
- DDOT will place message boards to alert motorists in the affected area of flash flood dangers between Rhode Island Ave. and Florida Ave. before 1st Street. Dispatch trucks and crews to assist with clearing standing water.
- DPW will establish a sandbag distribution point at 201 Bryant Street NW to help residents and businesses mitigate the effects of flash flooding. Deploy tow trucks to clear vehicles blocking the streets.
- HSEMA will consolidate response actions and monitor the event in order to coordinate the need for additional resources. HSEMA will also provide situational awareness reporting throughout the life of the event.

While the deployment of assets and personnel is situational, the District's response plan includes pre-storm resource management for flood-prone areas.

7.5 Voluntary Home Inspections for Environmental and Health Hazards

The Task Force is aware of community concerns that persistent flooding will result in environmental and health hazards in the home – particularly as a consequence of mold. However, the District's capacity to provide direct assistance to homeowners is limited. There are no District of Columbia regulations or policies that give any District agency the authority to test for mold or test the type of mold, or otherwise remediate mold in residential property. The District does not regulate mold conditions.

7.5.1.1 Department of Health

The Department of Health only inspects licensed facilities. It does not inspect residential homes.

7.5.1.2 Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs

Currently, the only agency that does limited home inspections is the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). DCRA can inspect for building defects and property damage, which may cause conditions that could lead or have led to mold growth (for example, a leaking pipe or damaged roof causing water to come into the structure).

DCRA inspectors have the authority to cite building code violations found during an inspection. However, DCRA is unable to cite “mold” as a specific building code violation. The Department of Health also has the capabilities to assess environmental building conditions but only inspects licensed facilities, which does not include inspection of residential homes.

Currently, the government does not remediate mold in residential property and cannot endorse specifically any company that specializes in such activity. The link (<http://mold.dc.gov>) is provided to constituents regarding resources on mold assessment and mold remediation processes.

7.5.1.3 District Department of the Environment

DDOE staff will be available to discuss mold remediation activities with residents as requested. The practices discussed will follow current EPA and industry standards for mold abatement.

7.6 Managing Stress during Emergency Situations

Emergency conditions create stress and the cluster of flood events from the summer of 2012 has caused heightened and sustained anxiety within the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park communities. Like other resource materials, residents need access to tools and practices for managing stress.

Although flooding is often overlooked regarding its physiological impacts, flooding, according to the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration, remains the most common type of natural disaster in the U.S. and can be particularly difficult in high water flooding. But, when loss of, or major damage to, any kind of property occurs, distress is often present.

No one who experiences a disaster is untouched by it. There are mental health concerns that exist in most aspects of preparedness, response, and recovery. However, it is important to understand that disaster stress and grief are ‘normal responses to an abnormal situation.’¹ Although the severity of the flooding may not rise to the level of district-wide or even community-wide emergency, the stress and fear of long-standing damage or temporary relocation can cause overwhelming anxiety and other stress responses when sudden or anticipated storm events occur.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) individuals who have experienced a traumatic event oftentimes suffer psychological stress associated with the incident. In most instances,

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://emergency.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/primer.asp>

these are normal reactions to abnormal situations. This has held true for the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park neighborhoods within the District, as residents and businesses have communicated the need to have resources available to help cope with stress that often accompanies repetitive flooding and sewer backups, and the resulting property damage. It is important that communities throughout the District understand that mental health assistance and resources are available to help maintain emotional stability, recover from the external stress of a disaster, and rebuild, if necessary.

7.6.1 Changes in Stress Level

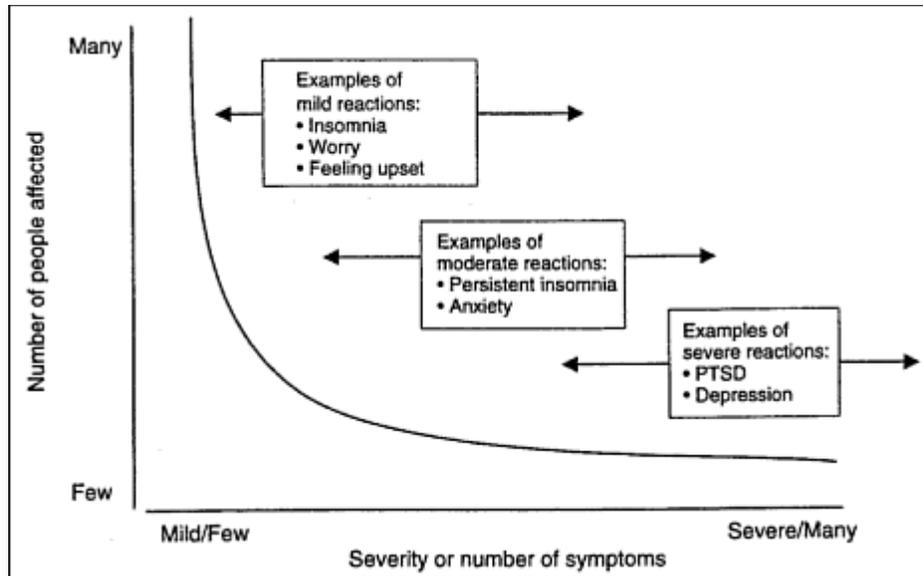
The level of stress and anxiety that is associated with an emergency or disaster event may change as people progress through each phase of the disaster. Disaster, in the context of this discussion, refers to the individual interpretation of severity, and the impact and implications for the person experiencing the event. Disasters span the spectrum from pre-disaster warning to post-disaster reconstruction.

It is not uncommon that an individual's capacity to cope with stress is strong during the early part of the disaster, which requires high organization skills to activate preparations, and drops drastically as one experiences disillusionment with the recovery process. But, often, the coping mechanisms resurge to allow people to focus on returning the environment to a norm state – even if it is a “new normal”.

7.6.2 Stress Symptoms That May Warrant Mental Health Referral

It is normal to experience stress due to the abnormal circumstances surrounding a disaster event. Even with the best coping strategies, circumstances can be so overwhelming and the sense of loss and depression can be so extreme that a professional support system is needed to help abate and control grief and frustration.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most people affected by a traumatic event “recover” without external intervention. As represented in Figure 7-1: Symptoms of Stress, a mild reaction (e.g., insomnia, worry, feeling upset) is very common and generally expected when there is a traumatic event. Often, the level of stress escalates to a higher level of anxiety. And, in some instances, people experience longer term depression and other severe reactions.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Figure 7-1: Symptoms of Stress

Guidance from the CDC suggests that the following reactions may signal the possible need for mental health referral.

- Disorientation: dazed, memory loss, unable to give date/time or recall recent events
- Depression: pervasive feeling of hopelessness and despair, withdrawal from others
- Anxiety: constantly on edge, restless, obsessive fear of another disaster
- Mental illness: hearing voices, seeing visions, delusional thinking
- Inability to care for self: not eating, bathing, changing clothing or handling daily life
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts or plans
- Problematic use of alcohol or drugs
- Domestic violence, child abuse or elder abuse

7.6.3 D.C. Department of Mental Health Resources

The District of Columbia Department of Mental Health (DMH) is available to provide support during and after a disaster. The mission of DMH is to develop, manage and oversee a public mental health system for adults, children and youth and their families that is consumer driven, community based, culturally competent and supports prevention, resiliency and recovery and the overall well-being of the District of Columbia.

Standard DMH services include crisis counseling, which is focused on minimizing the stress of the event, providing emotional support and improving the individual's coping strategies in the here and now and aids in reestablishing rational problem solving. The primary objective of crisis counseling is to return the individual and community to pre-crisis levels of functioning and to facilitate empowerment by countering feelings of fear and helplessness with support, stabilization and resources.

District resident may use the Access HelpLine at 1(888)7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357 to get connected to services provided by the DMH and its certified mental health care providers. This 24-hour, seven-day-a-week telephone line is staffed by mental health professionals who can refer a caller to immediate help or ongoing care. The Access Helpline can activate mobile crisis teams to respond to adults and children who are experiencing a psychiatric or emotional crisis and are unable or unwilling to travel to receive mental health services.

Call the Access Helpline to:

- Get emergency psychiatric care
- Help with problem solving
- Determine whether to seek ongoing mental health services or other types of services
- Find out what services are available

Contact Phone: (888) 793-4357

Contact TTY: 711

All DMH services conform to the guidelines established in the Department of Mental Health Response Plan (DMHRP), which is the Agency’s overarching approach for the strategic deployment of resources for a range of emergencies, including severe weather. The DMHRP is a comprehensive living emergency mental health management tool that corresponds with the operational principles defined in the District of Columbia Emergency Response Plan. It is consistent with the Federal Response Framework.

Table 7-4: Additional Local Resources

<p>The Mental Health Association of the District of Columbia 1628 Sixteenth Street, NW Washington, DC 20009 (202) 256-6363 Email: info@mhadc.org Website: www.whadc.org</p>	<p>Consumer Action Network (CAN) 1300 L Street, NW, Suite 1000 Washington, DC 20005 (202) 842-0001 Fax: (202)842-2685 Email: info@can-dc.org Website: www.can.dc.org</p>
<p>Consumer Leadership Forum 1023 Fairmont Street, NW #101 Washington, DC 20001 (202) 609-7451 Email: info@clfofdc.org Website: www.dc-clf.org</p>	<p>Depression Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) of the National Capital Area Contact 1: Info Line (202) 689-1250 Contact 2: Alvin Martin (301) 279-0831 Email: hello@dbsanca.org; Alvin@dbsanca.org Website: www.dbsanca.org</p>
<p>National Alliance on Mental Illness, Washington, DC (NAMI DC) 422 8th Street, SE, 2nd Floor Washington, DC 20003 (202)546-0646 Email: namidc@juno.com Website: www.nami.org/about/namidc</p>	<p>Ida Mae Campbell Wellness & Resource Center 1338 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 101 Washington, DC 20002 1(866)851-4945 (toll free) Email: bmcollum@idamaecampbell.org Website: www.ideamaecampbell.org</p>