

## **Media Advisory – Oct. 23, 2009**

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### **County residents urged to prepare now for floods**

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon has declared the week of Oct. 25-31 as Flood Preparedness Week, encouraging residents to prepare themselves and their families for fall and winter heavy rains.

Flooding is the most costly and damaging natural hazard in Snohomish County, generally occurring between October and March. The county has more than 222 square miles of floodplain area adjacent to its five main river systems (the Sauk, Stillaguamish, Skykomish, Pilchuck and Snohomish) and coastline. More than 8,600 households live in this area.

For many floodplain residents, preparing their homes, property and families to minimize damage and maintain safety is an important fall activity.

“Now is the time for families to consider flood patterns of past years and to identify safe evacuation routes that can be used in cases of extreme flooding,” Reardon said. “People underestimate the force and power of water.”

Just six inches of floodwater can knock a person down. As little as two feet of floodwater can carry a car away, and half of all flood-related drowning occurs when vehicles are driven into hazardous floodwater.

Snohomish County supports citizens’ efforts for flood preparedness by updating an annual publication that provides valuable flood-related information: the Snohomish County Guide to Protecting Life and Property in the Floodplain. The guide includes the following information:

- Flood emergency contact phone numbers and Web sites;
- Actions residents can take to avoid flood disaster – before, during and after a flood;
- How the county’s flood warning system works;
- How to insure your property to protect against flood losses;
- Whom to contact if your home has experienced repetitive flood losses (more than two flood claims in a 10-year-period) and you are interested in a home elevation or acquisition.

Residents can obtain a copy of the guide from local libraries, fire stations, Snohomish County Public Works’ Surface Water Management (SWM) Division or Department of Emergency Management (DEM) offices, or on the web ([www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org), type “2009 Flood Guide” in the search box.)

The county's work for flood management and disaster preparedness is a multi-departmental effort. DEM coordinates a multi-jurisdictional effort by county departments, cities, emergency agencies and relief organizations to be ready to assist during a season's flood and emergency events.

DEM also leads the effort to update the Snohomish County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP), a coordinated five-year pre-disaster plan that assesses risks for nine natural disasters: avalanche, dam failure, earthquake, flood, landslides, severe weather, tsunami, volcano eruptions and wild land fires. For more information on the update of this plan, please see the county's Web site, [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org), and type "NHMP Update" in the search box.

Further information on flooding and flood safety can be found at:

- [http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Public\\_Works/Divisions/SWM/Services/River\\_Flooding](http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Public_Works/Divisions/SWM/Services/River_Flooding)
- [http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Emergency\\_Management/](http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Emergency_Management/)
- Red Cross, Snohomish County Chapter [www.snohomishcounty.redcross.org](http://www.snohomishcounty.redcross.org)

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