

Flood Briefing Note

Summary

Following multiple flooding incidents across the county in recent years, feedback has suggested the need for better information to help you support your local communities in actions to take and who to contact before, during and after a flood. The County Council's Lead Local Flood Authority have developed more detailed guides for each of the [types of flooding](#) as well as information on [who is responsible](#) for each.

River (Fluvial) Flooding

During heavy or continuous rainfall, river levels can rise and burst their banks. This can cause serious flooding to surrounding homes, gardens, businesses and land.

It's important to be aware of the [level of flood risk](#) for your home and surrounding areas and to be signed up to [receive flood warnings](#) from the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency are responsible for all 'main rivers' in England. Key main rivers in Oxfordshire include:

- Thames
- Leach
- Windrush
- Evenlode
- Glyme
- Cherwell
- Ray
- Ock
- Thame

Any watercourse not defined by the Environment Agency as a main river is designated an 'ordinary watercourse'. These are the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council's Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) Team, who also manage the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit.

Surface Water (Pluvial) Flooding

Heavy rain can cause surface water flooding. Excess rainwater is often diverted into gullies (which feed into sewers), ditches and absorbed into the ground. If gullies or ditches become blocked, water can back up and lead to flooding. Any issues you notice that could increase the risk of surface water flooding can be reported to OCC Highways through [FixMyStreet](#).

Groundwater Flooding

When there is a high water table, flooding can occur from water seeping through walls or floors over time. It is most likely to affect basements. Groundwater flooding can occur weeks or months after continuous heavy rainfall.

Sewer Flooding

The majority of Oxfordshire's sewage system is maintained by Thames Water. A small number of estates are maintained by private companies.

Thames Water have provided a [step-by-step guide](#) for what to do if you experience sewer flooding. Issues can also be reported directly to Thames Water [through their website](#).

Reservoir Flooding

Reservoir flooding is incredibly unlikely within the UK due to the strict legislation in place regarding safety. You can check the extent of flooding if any reservoir in the UK were to fail using Environment Agencies' [Reservoir Flood Maps](#)

Flood Preparedness

You should encourage the public to sign up to the Environment Agency's 'Floodline' which can notify you if there is a risk of flooding in your area through either a, flood alert, flooding warning, or severe flood warning. You can [sign up here to be notified through either phone, text, or email](#).

The [Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit](#) is a central hub providing information to homeowners, businesses, landowners, and communities on a range of flood-related topics such as risk areas around the county, preparing for and recovering from an emergency, and roles within the local authority. The Toolkit allows for flooding reports to be made directly to the council.

The [National Flood Forum](#) is an independent charity supporting both individuals and communities at risk of flooding. They provide a number of services including, providing advice, ensure authorities take a community perspective and helping households with recovery after they have been flooded. The Forum has a helpline ([01299 403055](tel:01299403055)) open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday which can be used to help provide advice about any flooding related concerns.

Oxfordshire County Council has a [community resilience page](#) with information and a number of resources to support local communities. This includes a template for developing a Community Emergency Plan.

SSEN each year provide [funding to communities](#) to support them to become more resilient. This can be used for projects such as installing a generator at a community hall or installing flood doors at the most vulnerable properties (Application period for 2024 has now closed).

You can also use [FixMyStreet](#) to report any concerns such as blocked gullies and ditches to the Highways Authority to reduce the chance of surface water flooding in the community.

You should encourage members of the public to [sign up to PSR lists](#) which will support the identification of vulnerable persons during emergencies.

During Flooding

If it is an emergency and there is a risk to life, you should immediately call 999

If you wish, you can support the multi-agency support through social media by amplifying messages put out by OCC, Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue and the Environment Agency.

If flooding is anticipated, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) will establish an adverse weather page on their website. This page will contain relevant, up to date information, and links to useful resources. This page will be accessible through the home page of the OCC website and will also be shared across OCC social media channels.

Although they can provide protection for short periods of time, sandbags have been identified by the Environment Agency as largely ineffective in mitigating flooding compared to purpose-designed flood protection products. Sandbag policies can be found below:

- [Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- [Oxford City Council](#)
- [Cherwell District Council](#)
- [West Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [South Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

The Royal Life Saving Society has provided [advice regarding water safety in a flood](#). The AA has also provided advice regarding [driving through deep water, heavy rain and floods](#). Flood water will likely contain sewage contaminant, so you should avoid walking in it where possible and be aware of risks such as missing manhole covers and exposed electrics.

After Flooding

Once the water has subsided, it is important to be mindful of anything submerged within the flood water. Flood water is often not clean, it can be contaminated with sewage, animal waste and other substances and therefore should be disposed of correctly. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has shared a wealth of information surrounding the [health effects following a flood](#).

If government criteria is met, there may be funding available for residents to receive grants to support their recovery. This will be advertised on both county and district platforms. We would encourage you to share this as much as possible.

[Flood Re](#) is a re-insurance scheme that makes flood cover more widely available and affordable as part of your home insurance, helping households at the highest risk of flooding.

To support the Council ensure accurate reporting numbers of flooded properties, supporting future flood mitigation and preparedness projects, reports can be made on the [Flood Toolkit](#).

Further information has been provided from the Government about [recovery following a flood event](#).



Contacts:

Contact	Purpose	Contact Details	Hours
Emergency Services	If there is an immediate threat to life	999	24/7
Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team	For support with any evacuations ongoing within the county. Activation of Community Emergency Plans	01865 323765	24/7
OCC Highways	For issues on highways across Oxfordshire, including flooded roads and flooding resulting from the highways.	0345 310 1111	08:30 – 17:00 (Mon – Thurs) 08:30 – 16:00 (Friday) Out of hours, a further number will be provided over answer phone
National Highways	For issues relating to the: M40, A34, A43	0300 123 5000	07:00 – 19:00
Thames Water	For sewer flooding	0300 123 500	24/7
Environment Agency	Floodline: For main rivers	Telephone: 0345 988 1188 Textphone: 0345 602 6340	24/7
FixMyStreet	For reporting potential flooding issues	FixMyStreet	<u>24/7 – Not emergency response</u>
Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit	For a wealth of information for flood mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. For reporting a flood. Providing evidence such as pictures of flooding to support post-flood investigations. Pictures should include time, date and location.	Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit	<u>24/7 – Not emergency response</u>