Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: I think a loved one with disabilities or mobility issues might be affected. What should I do ahead of the flooding?
A: If you have family, friends or neighbors with special needs, help them with these extra precautions. People with disabilities often require assistance and additional lead-time in order to prepare for a disaster. Register with fire departments or volunteer centers, identify multiple evacuation routes at home, carry emergency health info and contacts at all times, carry an alternate means of communication like a dry erase board or writing tablet and markers, an escape chair for those who are mobility impaired and stock additional emergency supplies including medications.

Q: I am elderly/disabled – who can I call for help or assistance?
A: Elderly and/or disabled people should get help from a personal support network (friends, family, neighbors) in preparing for flooding just like everyone else. Have a way out, ensure that mobility needs are met (including checking that equipment is in good working order), stock supplies like a NOAA Weather Radio, cell phone, 3-5 day supply of food, fresh drinking water, and extra medications. You can also contact 1-800-SENIORCARE (800-736-4672).

Q: Can I turn off my own power?
A: Customers should not attempt to disconnect their electric service on their own.

Q: Who do I contact if my basement is flooded?
A: If you don’t have flood insurance, you should think about getting it now to protect yourself financially against flood damage. If you have flood insurance, contact your flood insurance agent. Normal homeowner’s insurance does not cover flood damage.

Q: How do I get flood debris and floodwater cleared from my property?
A: Different municipalities will have their own policies for disposing of flood-damaged items. Contact your local municipality for more information.

Q: Will someone knock on my door and get me if I lose a cell phone signal?
A: There is no way for first responders to know if someone does not have cell phone service. First responders make every attempt to notify individuals of an impending evacuation. Sometimes it is just not possible to get to everyone, that is why it is important to stay informed by signing up for NIXLE, having a NOAA Weather Radio, and staying tuned to your favorite local TV/radio stations.

Q: What is the danger to me and my family if the house is flooded, and who will let us know if we need to leave?
A: First responders make every attempt to notify individuals of an impending evacuation. Sometimes it is just not possible to get to everyone, that is why it is important to stay informed by signing up for NIXLE, having a NOAA Weather Radio, and staying tuned to your favorite local TV/radio stations.

Q: My house is in the line of a flood right now. What steps should I take/who do I contact?
A: Remove items from your basement in advance of flooding; have a plan, be prepared. Stay out of floodwaters and do not go into any room with water in it. If you have an emergency, call 911.

Q: Will FEMA or the State of Wisconsin pay to repair or replace my damaged home or property?
A: Typically, no. In Vernon County, the amount of damage caused by weather-related events has to hit a certain dollar threshold to apply for financial assistance from the State of Wisconsin or FEMA. Occasionally a municipality can apply to the State of Wisconsin for some disaster-related reimbursement, but that is for Municipal expenses.

Q: Who do I call for financial recovery? Who will pay to clean and repair my flooded house or property?
A: If you have flood insurance, contact your flood insurance agent. Typically, in Vernon County, the amount of damage caused by weather-related events is not high enough to apply for financial assistance from the State of Wisconsin or FEMA. It is incident specific and whether or not a certain dollar threshold is met or not. It is very important to have insurance (especially flood insurance), as the property owner will be responsible for damage on their property.

Q: If something happens to my property, who is going to pay for it? Who will pay to repair or replace my damaged or destroyed business property and equipment?
A: The property owner is solely responsible for their property and business equipment. This is another reason why it is important to protect yourself financially against flood damage by getting flood insurance.

Q: How do I get sandbags set up to protect my home or business? Where do I get sandbags?
A: You can purchase sandbags from many local home improvement stores. You can also contact the County Emergency Management department to make the assessment if sandbags are needed and will function properly.

Q: What is a flood?
A: Flooding is an overflow of large amounts of water onto a normally dry land. Flooding happens in many ways due to overflow of streams, rivers, lakes or oceans, or because of excessive rain or runoff.

Q: What steps can I take right now to limit the effect of the expected flooding issues?
A: Check out our Flood Preparedness Page for more details.

Q: Do I need to store up drinking water in advance of the flood, and why?
A: It is always a good idea to prepare an emergency kit for your home. These kits contain necessities and other items to help your family take care of itself for at least the first 72 hours. Papers, Purses, Pills, Pets, Phones, Prescriptions. Think about those items amongst others; food & water (for both people and pets), first aid, batteries, etc. Check out Ready.gov for more.
Q: Who should I call if I lose power, sewer or water?
A: Customers experiencing a power outage should contact their local energy provider to report their outage. For sewer and water, call your utility provider.

Q: Is it safe to go in my flooded basement? What if the power is on?
A: Residents should never enter flooded areas of their home without first having their electric and natural gas service turned off. Floodwater can damage appliances such as furnaces or water heaters which creates hazardous conditions.

Q: Is there a radio station I should be tuned in to? Can I sign up for alerts?
A: You should stay tuned to your favorite TV & radio stations for news updates. You can sign up for NIXLE alerts through the Emergency Management homepage. It is also a great idea to have a NOAA Weather Radio.

Q: My property is eroding or flooding, what can I do?
A: Many possible options exist to address eroding or flooding issues. The appropriate actions for a particular property are often situational and site specific. The best option for a property experiencing eroding or flooding issues can range from do-nothing, implementation of site management best practices, relocation of a house, and when absolutely necessary, construction of shore protection structures.

Q: How can I incorporate nature-based approached into a shoreline project?
A: Depending on the site, restoration of natural coastal defenses like beaches, dunes, and wetlands could be incorporated into a shoreline project. In almost all cases, maintaining or re-establishing deep-rooted and native vegetation near the shoreline and on coastal slopes can help. Vegetation has multiple benefits, as it helps better hold the soil against erosion, slows runoff, and removes potentially destabilizing water from the soil. A no-mow buffer of at least 10 feet from the shore and edge of a bluff is also a good idea.

Q: How Can You Prevent a Basement Backup?
A: Use a Backflow Preventer. Do you know what a Backflow Preventer is? It’s a device that can help prevent a sanitary sewer backup in your home.

Also, Don’t Treat Your Toilet Like a Trash Can: Flush Only the “3Ps.” (Pee, Poo, Toilet Paper). Are you flushing wipes (including those labeled flushable), feminine hygiene products, dental floss, cotton balls, and anything other than the “3Ps” in your toilet? Are you pouring grease, fats, and oils down your drain in your kitchen sink? These items can clump together in your home’s pipes, congeal and cause a backup in your basement. These items also inhibit the proper functioning of the infrastructure to keep the wastewater process flowing. During times of floods, this can increase potential for sewer backups and overflows.

Q: How Can I Do My Part to Help My Community’s Wastewater Treatment Systems During Times of Flooding? Can the Laundry and Dishes Wait?
A: In times of flooding, water going down the drains can stress the already over-burdened underground pipes in our community. These pipes include those from your residence, which are connected to your municipality, which are connected to the sewerage district. While sanitary
sewer and storm water pipes should not be interconnected, excess clear water or storm water
does get into the sanitary sewer system. Clear water and storm water that enters into the sanitary
sewer system it is an occurrence called Inflow and Infiltration, or I&I.

**Q: What Causes Excess Water Getting into the Sanitary Sewer System?**

A: Sump pump connections to the sanitary sewer line. Leaky pipes out in the community
(including residential laterals) due to root intrusion, aging infrastructure, and more. Improper
connections between clear water and sanitary sewer systems.