

...Severe Weather Awareness Week in New England and New York...

The National Weather Service, along with all the New England states and the state of New York, have proclaimed this week as Severe Weather Awareness Week. Today, we look at flash flooding.

Historically, flooding has been the number one natural disaster in loss of property and life in Vermont and northern New York.

The term "flash flood" refers to rapid rises in streams and rivers, usually 6 hours or less. The term "flood" is reserved for longer duration flooding. Both are equally serious, if a warning for either is issued, action should be taken immediately.

Most flash flooding is caused by heavy rain from thunderstorms. Smaller creeks and streams are particularly vulnerable to flash flooding, especially in mountainous terrain such as the Montgomery Vermont flood in July 1997, much of the North Country during June of 1998, Hancock in August 2008, and Ellenburg in August 2010. Heavy rain from remnants of tropical storms have also created flooding in the North Country, such as tropical storm Dean in 1995, tropical storm Floyd in 1999 and Irene in 2011.

One of the best defenses against the threat of floods is to stay informed. Listen to NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio to stay updated on the latest forecasts, statements, watches and warnings. Know your surroundings. Areas near creeks, rivers, or lakes are all susceptible to flooding.

Heavy rain can make even the smallest stream a raging torrent. Rain far upstream can cause flooding at a downstream location, even though you have not witnessed any rain at all.

A flood or flash flood watch means conditions are favorable for flooding to occur. A watch may be issued several hours before flooding is expected. This is the time to make preparations and keep informed. If a flood or flash flood is observed, or a warning is issued, take action immediately. If you are in a flood prone area, move to higher ground immediately as evacuation routes may be cut off, leaving you stranded.

If you are in your vehicle and flood waters are rising around you, abandon the vehicle and move to higher ground. Never try to drive across bridges or streets covered by flood water, the water may have eroded them making them unsafe. Most flood fatalities occur at night, be especially cautious after dark when it is harder to recognize areas of high water.

More information on severe weather as well as forecasts and other weather information can be found at www.weather.gov/burlington. Also, visit our NWS Burlington Facebook and Twitter sites for more information.