



**FEMA**

# Recovery News

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## PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM FUTURE FLOOD DAMAGE

**ANDOVER, Mass.** – As cleanup continues in the aftermath of the heavy rains and flooding that struck Massachusetts during late March, state and federal officials urge disaster victims to take measures to prevent the damage from happening again.

Recovery officials point out that it is safer, cheaper, and ultimately much easier to limit future destruction than to repair it afterward. The rebuilding phase of a disaster is the ideal time to consider ways to limit future damage.

There are simple, inexpensive ways to prevent or reduce future flood damage. FEMA calls such actions *hazard mitigation*.

While some mitigation measures such as the elevation of buildings are costly long-term projects, there are simple home improvements that residents of flood-prone areas can make to help themselves.

Although many recommended measures require employing a contractor, some can be accomplished by a competent do-it-yourselfer. It is important, however, to talk to your local building officials before you start any work. They can provide information on local standards and building codes.

Several suggestions to keep damages from happening are:

- **Relocate or elevate water heaters, furnaces, and major appliances.** Water heaters, furnaces and appliances, such as washers and dryers in the basement, can be elevated. Place them on a masonry or pressure-treated wood base at least 12 inches above the previous high-water mark or your home's projected flood elevation. Appliances can also be moved to the first or second floor. Some heating systems can be suspended from the basement ceiling.
- **Elevate or relocate electrical systems.** Electrical panel boxes, circuit breakers, wall switches, and wall outlets should be relocated at least 12 inches above your home's projected flood elevation. In some cases, they can even be moved to a higher floor. A licensed electrician familiar with local codes should be hired to do this work. An uninterrupted electrical supply will allow the homeowner to move back to the home more quickly after a flood.

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- **Install a septic backflow valve.** Flooded septic systems can force sewage back into the home. Not only is this an unpleasant experience, it also presents a health risk. Backflow valves can be installed inside or outside the structure but must conform to local building codes.
- **Build interior and exterior floodwalls.** A watertight masonry floodwall can be constructed to enclose furnaces, utilities and appliances on the lowest floor of the building. On the outside, a similar wall could be constructed around the perimeter of the basement opening to keep water from entering.
- **Anchor your fuel tank.** Fuel tanks, either inside or outside the home, should be anchored to prevent them from overturning or breaking loose in a flood. Metal straps and bolts should be non-corrosive, and wood structural supports should be pressure treated.

Funding for hazard mitigation projects may be available to victims of the recent floods who qualify for U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest loans. SBA disaster loans may be increased up to 20 percent to cover the cost of improvements that will protect property from damages of the same kind in the future.

Since the March 29 presidential declaration, more than 21,000 residents of the seven declared counties (Bristol, Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk and Worcester) have registered for disaster assistance by calling the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at **800-621-FEMA (3362)** or 800-462-7585 (TTY) or by enrolling online at **[www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov)** .

*FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders and to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

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