DRAINAGE SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

The County of San Diego has a complex storm drainage system, public and private, composed of streets and gutters, catch basins, underground pipes, ditches, pump stations, and channels. This system is used to carry water away from homes and businesses into rivers and streams. It is important to consistently maintain this system so it can be used to full capacity. The County regularly inspects the public system and performs maintenance as needed. Please help us ensure the capacity of the entire system by maintaining the private system.

• Check the County’s Survey Records System to determine if there are private or public drainage facilities on your property: https://srs.sandiegocounty.gov.
• Keep streams and other conveyances that carry rainfall runoff through your property free of obstructions and debris such as trees, tall bushes, and trash. A plugged or obstructed drain cannot carry water and could cause flooding.
• Never dump or throw anything into the streets or storm-drainage system. To do so is a violation of the County’s Watershed Protection Ordinance No. 10410.
• If you see trash or debris in the public drainage system, contact the County’s Public Works Field Operations staff at (619) 443-1260 weekdays or (877) 684-8000 evenings and weekends.

FLOOD SAFTY

To reduce your risk of injury during a flood:
• Do not attempt to cross a fast-flowing stream where water is above your ankles.
• Keep children away from rivers, ditches, culverts, and storm drains.
• Do not travel on flooded roads or through drop sections and never drive past a “Road Closed” barrier.
• If your home will be affected by flood waters, turn off all electric circuits at the fuse panel or disconnect switch.
• Prepare a family plan that covers activities before, during, and after flood emergencies. (ready.sandiego.org)

FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AND PERMITTING

Always check with the County Planning and Development Services and Public Works departments before you build, fill, alter, or grade on your property. All new developments, or any alterations, additions, or modifications to your building or land require a permit. Before you begin construction, contact the Planning and Development Services staff at the County’s Operation Center at 5510 Overland Avenue, San Diego, CA. (858) 510-694-2055.

In addition to regular building permits, special regulations apply to construction in the floodplain and in floodways. No construction, including filling, is allowed in the mapped floodway without an engineering analysis that shows the project will not increase flood damage elsewhere. Any activity outside the floodplain but within a natural or engineered watercourse also requires a permit.

Elevation or floodproofing may be required if you plan to substantially improve your existing structure located within a FEMA or county identified flood zone (the cost of the improvement or add-on is 50% of the value of the existing structure). If your property is substantially damaged (50 percent of the value of the building), Federal regulations may require you to elevate or floodproof before you rebuild. The document titled, “Answers to Questions About Substantially Improved/Substantially Damaged Buildings” (FEMA 213 / August 2018) will help answer questions on this topic and can be obtained free by calling 1-800-480-2520 or visiting https://www.fema.gov.

To report illegal floodplain development or to verify that proper construction permits have been issued, contact the Department of Public Works Flood Control at (858) 493-5318. An inspector will investigate.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Local Disaster Response (Non-Emergency) 211

Department of Public Works
Flood Control (858) 495-5318
Stream Dumping Violations (888) 846-0800
Drainage System Maintenance
(858) 443-1260
(24 Hour) (877) 684-8000

County Office of Emergency Services (858) 565-3490
FEMA (800) 621-FEMA or (800) 621-3362
American Red Cross (858) 309-1200

Contact the County’s Survey Records System to determine if there are private or public drainage facilities on your property: https://srs.sandiegocounty.gov.
THE FLOOD RISK IS REAL AND WIDESPREAD

Floods are America’s most common natural disaster. There are estimated 6,600 residential and commercial buildings subject to flooding within the unincorporated areas of San Diego County.

Even if you live miles away from water, you can be a victim of flooding. In fact, nearly 1 in 4 flood insurance claims are paid out in areas that are not considered to be in an area subject to flooding.

The staff of the Flood Control Counter at the County Operations Center at 5510 Overland Avenue in San Diego are available to assist you in person or by telephone at (858) 495-5318 with the following information:

- Whether a property is located within an NFIP or County mapped flood zone
- Flood insurance rating information such as FEMA flood zone and regulatory base flood elevation
- FEMA Beviation Certificate, if available. The Beviation Certificate is an essential tool used to accurately rate flood insurance policies.
- Information on mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements
- Regulatory provisions that may apply to your property.
- If available, whether or not the property has ever suffered any flood damage.

LOCAL FLOOD HAZARDS

Seven principal watersheds originate or traverse through the County of San Diego. They are the Santa Margarita, San Luis Rey, San Dieguito, San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana Rivers. The county of San Diego has suffered from numerous major flood events brought on by intense or prolonged rainfall and resulting in loss of life and millions of dollars in property damages. Over the past decade, major floods have occurred in Mission Valley, El Cajon, Ramona, and Borrego Springs. In addition to these major flood events, flooding has been known to occur in localized areas of the County during average seasonal rains. Flooding is also known to occur after major fire events, which the County of San Diego closely monitors.

The central and eastern portions of the County of San Diego are most susceptible to flash floods where moun
tains meet the coastal plain. Due to the specific geographic unique of the county, alluvial fans are found in the Borrego Valley and require special construction methods to protect buildings. Specific areas of localized flooding (or “hot spots”) are identified in the County’s Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is available for public review at https://sandiego.onerain.com/. Flooding is also known to occur after major fire events, which the County of San Diego closely monitors.

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FLOOD WARNING

Flood warnings are disseminated by the Emergency Alert System through local radio and television stations. Flood warnings can be issued if there is a forecast of a significant flood or if flooding has already occurred.

FLOOD WARNING

- A Flash Flood Warning means that a Flood Watch is in effect and that a Flood Warning may be issued in your area at any time. If you are in a Flood Watch area, you should prepare for the possibility of flooding.
- A Flood Watch means that the possibility of flooding is possible in your area. You should begin preparations to protect your property.
- A Flood Warning means that flooding is imminent. You should take action immediately.

In addition to flood warnings, the County provides real-time information regarding high water crossings, road closures, and evacuation routes. Warnings may also be issued to affected residents, businesses, and property owners. To register their cell phones online to receive information during an emergency, the ALERT! Flood Warning System in San Diego County consists of over 120 ALERT flood warning stations, which include 25 stream gauges, 10 reservoir level sensors, 99 rainfall sensors, and 3 weather stations. The ALERT rainfall data is available at: https://sandiego.onerain.com/home.php and https://www.weather.gov/sky/hydrol. The County also maintains a webcam that captures high water crossings within the unincorporated area. View them here: http://www.sdccfd.org/webcams.html

Natural and Beneficial Functions of Floodplains

When portions of floodplains are preserved or restored to their natural state, they provide many benefits to both human and natural systems. Open space resources areas adjacent to floodplains increase aesthetics and recreational opportunities; reduce the number and severity of storms that cause floods; enhance habitat for many species; and help manage non-point source pollution.

In addition, according to policies stated in the County of San Diego Land Use Plan, a large portion of the floodplains within the County are held for open space uses, such as parks and other recreational areas, many in a natural or beneficial state. The County’s Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) further ensures that the objectives of the General Plan are met.

The MSCP goals are to maintain and enhance biological diversity in the region; maintain viable populations of endangered, threatened, and sensitive species and their habitats, and protect water quality.

Additional information about the County’s MSCP can be found at https://www.sandiego.gov/pdfs/mscp/
or by emailing mscp@sdcounty.ca.gov.

The “County of San Diego Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management, and Discharge Control Ordinance” requires measures to control flow rates and velocities so that flows and flow paths do not cause damage to the County or its facilities subject to flood damage rather than to keep floodwaters away. Raising a house above the flood level is the best property protection method of moving the building entirely out of the floodplain. If a building cannot be removed from harm’s way, it can be protected on site. In areas of low flood threat, such as infrequent shallow flooding, barriers, and dry and wet floodplains, floodproofing, can be effective approaches. Other property protection measures you can take include:

- Raise your furnace, water heater, and electric panel to higher floors or the attic if they are in areas of your home that may be flooded.
- Install check valves in plumbing to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home. As a last resort, when floods threaten, use large clogs or stoppers to plug shower, tubs, or basins.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage through cracks.
- Move furniture and any other valuables to higher floors.
- Keep materials like sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and lumber handy for emergency waterproofing.

To learn more, visit FEMA’s website at https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-mapped-flood getCounty website https://www.readsandiego.org/

FEMA provides grants, in certain situations, for property protection measures that reduce disaster losses and protect life and property from future disaster damage. Most disaster mitigation grants are made to the state or local government rather than to the homeowner directly. If you have purchased your home with a cost-share requirement, to learn more about these programs, visit FEMA’s website at https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation.

Don’t wait until it is too late. A policy takes 30 days from application to effective date of coverage. For more information, contact your agent or the NFIP Help Center at: 1-877-336-2627 or visit https://www.floodsmart.gov.

PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY

Flooding is America’s most common natural disaster. It is responsible for over $1 billion in property damages each year. In fact, nearly 1 in 4 flood insurance claims are paid out in areas that are not considered to be in an area subject to flooding.

In addition to the protection provided by flood insurance, you can protect your property through a variety of measures that can vary in complexity and cost. Proper flood protection measures are used to modify buildings or other structures subject to high ground or river flooding. The following measures may be used to protect your property from floodwaters away. Raising a house above the flood level is the best property protection method of moving the building entirely out of the floodplain. If a building cannot be removed from harm’s way, it can be protected on site. In areas of low flood threat, such as infrequent shallow flooding, barriers, and dry and wet floodplains, floodproofing, can be effective approaches. Other property protection measures you can take include:

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