

FLOODING PREPAREDNESS: HOW TO PREPARE YOUR GARAGE AND STORE YOUR TOOLS

The most common weather-based disaster in the United States is flooding. Flooding threatens lives, homes, and businesses. Yearly, the United States spends around \$3 billion on dealing with flood damage. Flooding can and does happen everywhere. However, some places are more prone to flooding than others. Florida, for example, has a higher than average rate of flooding, and Maine sees a lot of flooding in the spring when the snow pack melts.

Flooding is often accompanied by wind. During harsh storms, garage doors are often destroyed. Garage doors are built to be lightweight and withstand a lot of daily use, but high winds can damage the structural integrity and weatherstripping of the door. A damaged door won't be able to withstand flooding. Once a garage door is damaged in a storm, the entire house or garage may suffer heavy damage. However, there are steps property owners and managers can take to protect their property.

SEAL ANY LEAKS OR CRACKS

Visually inspect the floor, walls, and roof of the garage. Look for any cracks. This is a process that takes a lot of time to do well, but it's important to find those cracks and seal them before bad weather strikes. Luckily, sealing cracks is a relatively fast, easy fix.

If you need to repair floor cracks:

- Thoroughly sweep the floor.
- Remove all debris, dust, weeds, and other items from the crack.
- Fill the crack slowly using concrete filler.
- With a trowel, smooth down the filler. Wipe away any excess.
- Leave the filler undisturbed for a day so it can properly cure and harden.

If you need to repair wall cracks:

- Scrub the wall and clean out any dust from the crack.
- The type of material the wall is made from determines what should be used to repair the crack. Concrete filler should be used on concrete

walls. Drywalled garages will need new drywall compound applied. Some wall types should be should be repaired using epoxy.

MORE INFORMATION

- Cracks in a Concrete Floor? A home inspector explains the dangers presented by cracked concrete floors in this video.
- Fixing Cracks in Concrete Walls: One important tip when repairing concrete is that it must be thoroughly dry before any work begins.

INSPECT YOUR GARAGE DOOR

Next, it's important to thoroughly inspect the garage door. It's the garage's biggest weak point when it comes to flooding, and if it fails, the garage and everything stored inside will be in danger.

- Look for holes or cracks in the door.
- The door should form a seal with the ground when closed.
- The weatherstripping should be pliable. Cracked weatherstripping is no longer working properly.

Does the door have holes? These repairs are usually quick.

- Turn the power off to the automatic garage door opener.
- Sand down the hole, then thoroughly clean away the dust.
- Use spray foam insulation on the crack or hole.
- Sand down the foam on the inside and outside of the door.

There are also other common repairs property owners can usually do themselves. One is replacing a bottom seal that no longer forms a tight bond with the ground. Sometimes, it's easier to use a threshold seal on the garage floor instead of replacing the seal on the bottom of the garage door. Hardware and big-box stores sell weatherstripping kits to replace decaying weatherstripping currently on a door. Sometimes, a garage door that doesn't close properly just needs a good cleaning because debris has gotten into the hinges of the door or on the garage door sensor. However, sometimes, garage doors need adjusting.

To adjust a garage door:

- Close the door.
- Loosen the tracks the door uses by carefully loosening the screws holding them in place.
- Using a level, readjust the track positions.

- Tighten the screws.

FURTHER READING

- [Seven Easy Steps to Adjust Garage Door Springs](#): The springs that help operate the garage door also should be inspected and adjusted if necessary.
- [Installing a Garage Door Threshold](#): Not only will a garage door that closes solidly protect the garage from water, but it also helps protect the garage from pests.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE PROPER DRAINAGE

Gutters can actually cause the garage to flood. For example, backed-up street gutters can cause water to run into the driveway and then into the garage.

It's possible to install a French drain to prevent this from occurring.

The gutters on the garage can also be both protection and a danger when it comes to flooding. Gutters should be cleaned regularly; clogged gutters will end up pushing water into the structure they are meant to be protecting instead of safely carrying the water away like properly functioning gutters do. It's also possible to have flood vents installed to help prevent water damage to the garage and its foundation.

Follow these steps to install a French drain:

- Carefully decide where the water should go.
- Mark the route of the French drain with spray paint.
- Dig a trench about half a foot wide along the spray-painted path. The trench should be slightly less deep than the foundation of the structure it surrounds.
- Add gravel to the bottom of the freshly dug trench.
- Cover the trench with landscape fabric.
- Lay a drainpipe on the landscape fabric, and cover the pipe with gravel.
- Fold the edges of the landscape fabric over the gravel.
- Cover the trench with sand, dirt, and grass.

FURTHER READING

- [French Drains: How to Build an Exterior French Drain System](#): These thorough instructions explain in detail how to install a French drain.
- [Here's Everything You Need to Know About How to Clean Your Gutters](#): Gutters need cleaning, and this guide will help beginners understand how to complete the task safely.

STORE ITEMS STRATEGICALLY

Items in a garage should be stored with the thought of protecting them from water damage. Sealing leaks is a big part of this. However, properly storing items also helps protect them.

- Use a solid tool bench to securely store tools.
- Workbenches and other furniture should rest on concrete blocks.
- Cover large items with plastic sheeting.
- Don't store paper documents or photographs in the garage.
- Elevate any electrical tools or equipment, like lawnmowers, on ramps.

FURTHER READING

- [How to Take Care of Your Tools](#): Tools that are stored correctly have a longer working life.
- [How to Organize Your Tools: Three Tips for Storing Tools](#): Keeping similar items together in a well-built tool bench helps keep a garage functional and tools easily accessible.

CONSIDER YOUR LANDSCAPING

Landscape design can be attractive and also help prevent flooding of the garage and any surrounding structures. Choosing absorbent or porous materials is the first step in a landscaping plan that reduces flooding risk.

- Dig a swale (like a shallow moat) to direct water away from structures.
- Plant a rain garden to help absorb heavy rainfall.
- Instead of using pine mulch that will float away when confronted with rapidly moving water, choose thick layers of gravel, rock, or even pine straw.
- Make sure downspouts are in working order and are directing water far away from the garage.
- Build driveways from gravel or brick instead of using asphalt.

FURTHER READING

- [Soak Up the Rain: Rain Barrels](#): Rain barrels are good for the environment and also help protect homes and garages from flooding caused by downspouts.
- [How to Install a Gravel Driveway: Types, Ideas, and Costs](#): Installing a gravel driveway can save money while also helping to prevent flooding.

USE SANDBAGS

If flooding is imminent, sandbags can help protect a garage. Sometimes, governments provide them as part of disaster preparedness, or they can be made at home. Here's how to use them:

- Put a plastic tarp in front of the garage door as high up as the water may reach.
- Nail the tarp into place.
- Line up the first row of sandbags directly against the tarp.
- Lay the second row of sandbags across the first row, overlapping the gaps between the bags in the first row.
- Repeat until the door is secured.

FURTHER READING

- [How Do I Make a Sandbag?](#) It's possible to make sandbags at home when preparing for flooding.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

- [Preparing for a Flood:](#) Some basic preparedness tips include checking local flood maps and purchasing flood insurance.
- [Flood Preparedness and Response:](#) OSHA shares tips for businesses and employers to help them prepare for flooding.
- [Flood Safety:](#) It's important to know the difference between a watch and a warning and what you should do before either is issued.
- [Flood Preparedness:](#) Situational awareness is one key aspect in preparing for any bad weather, especially when it comes to floods.
- [When the Waters Rise, Will You Know What to Do?](#) Floods can happen anywhere, and they are among the most common natural disasters.
- [Before a Flood or Flash Flood:](#) Basic preparedness includes going over the family safety plan and making sure the household has basic supplies.
- [Flood Preparedness Activity Book:](#) This activity book is designed to help kids learn about floods and what to do if they are ever in one in an age-appropriate manner.
- [Flood Safety Checklist:](#) Knowing how to protect property and what are the best evacuation routes for escape are two important pieces of a flood preparedness strategy.
- [Emergency Flood Kit:](#) Preparing a kit in advance is key to getting through a flood and getting your family's life back on track once the waters recede.

- How You Can Prepare for Flooding: Having supplies on hand and tracking weather reports are vital parts of preparing for an incoming flood.