THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY FLOOD WARDENS HANDBOOK

This document can be produced in Braille, large print, audio tape and in other languages.

If you would like a copy in one of these formats, please phone the Print and Design Department on 01285 623215.
Many Towns/Parishes are developing maps which identify Riparian Ownership responsibilities; this is an incredibly useful tool to help unravel what can sometimes be complex legislation.

The Environment Agency has an excellent document called “Living on the Edge” which explains the practicalities of this legislation in some detail.

In all circumstances the Flood Warden can play an important role in highlighting the areas that need maintenance, and communicating with the appropriate person/group or organisation.
The Role of Community Flood Wardens

The most valuable asset any community has are the residents of that community – especially if those members are prepared to offer their support and help to the community.

Community Flood Wardens can play a crucial role in helping to prepare a community against the risk of flooding. Local knowledge is key to both preventing flooding and also for minimising the impact of flooding if it does occur.

Before talking about what a Community Flood Warden does – we need to first highlight what they don’t do.

Flood Wardens do not.

- Place themselves at risk or undertake ANY activity that places them in danger.
- Take responsibility for moving anyone’s personal property
- Take responsibility for protecting anyone’s property
- Provide sandbags or other flood protection equipment
- Clear watercourses, ditches or culverts
- Absolve Riparian Owners of their responsibility to clear and maintain watercourses

Flood Wardens do.

- “Watch” a section of the river and report on its condition:
  By keeping a watchful eye on specific key areas of local watercourses a Flood Warden will be able to gain an understanding of how that watercourse functions and when it is at risk of flooding.
- Inform when clearing needs to take place:
  By monitoring the watercourse the Flood Warden can inform the appropriate people when clearing or maintenance or repair needs to take place.
- Monitors weather/flood warnings from The Environment Agency:
  By registering for and monitoring flood alerts from Floodline – 0845 988 1188
- Provide an early warning if the watercourse is rising:
  By keeping an eye on a set area of watercourse, monitoring Floodline and watching the local weather, a Flood Warden can recognise the risks of flooding in a particular area.

It would be useful to develop a simple categorisation for different levels of flood risk. The Environment Agency has 4 categories of alert – it would make sense for Flood Wardens to use this:
Flood Watch
Flooding of low lying land and roads is expected.

What to do:
• Monitor local news and weather forecasts.
• Be aware of water levels near you.
• Be prepared to act on your flood plan.
• Check on the safety of pets and livestock.
• Charge your mobile phone.

Flood Warning
Flooding of homes and businesses is expected. Act now!

What to do
• Move cars, pets, food, valuables and important documents to safety.
• Get flood protection equipment in place.
• Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
• Be prepared to evacuate your home.
• Protect yourself, your family and help others.
• Act on your flood plan.

Severe Flood Warning
Act now! Severe flooding is expected with danger to life and property.

What to do
• Collect things you need for evacuation.
• Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
• Stay in a high place with a means of escape.
• Avoid electricity sources.
• Avoid walking or driving through flood water.
• In danger call 999 immediately.
• Listen to emergency services.
• Act on your flood plan.

All Clear
No further flooding is expected. Water levels will start to go down.

What to do
• Keep listening to weather reports.
• Only return to evacuated buildings if you are told it is safe.
• Beware sharp objects and pollution in flood water.
• If your property or belongings are damaged, contact your insurance company.
  Ask their advice before starting to clean up.

Communicate with a set area of the community
Each Flood Warden is allocated a specific area of the community to pass on the message about potential flooding. This may be by visiting individual properties, setting up a telephone round robin, text, email or a combination of all. The Flood Warden issues the level of warning and suggests that people take the appropriate action to protect themselves and or their property.

Understand the needs of a specific section of the community
During any emergency it is important to direct resources to where they are most needed and to help those people who most need it.

People can be vulnerable for a variety of reasons:
• Age (both young and older people)
• Permanent Impairment/Disability
• Temporary Impairment/Disability/ill health (broken leg etc)
• Learning Impairment
• Location (i.e. remote/isolated)
• Proximity to danger– (close to a river prone to flooding)
• Travellers/temporary residents
• Tourists

It may be very useful for emergency services to have an awareness of these people and places in order that they can take action to protect/evacuate or rescue if necessary. It would also be useful for any town or parish emergency planning group to be able to contact some of these groups or individuals to provide warnings, reassurance and or support in the event of an incident.

The type of information needed may vary considerably and some thought needs to be given to what information may be helpful:

Simple examples
• A flood occurs or is predicted - It would be useful for emergency services to know that there is a caravan site next to a river prone to flooding, and to have contact details for the person who manages/is responsible for it.

• Mrs Smith has a broken leg and her husband is away on business, they have flood protection boards available to protect their property, but Mrs Smith is likely to need some help putting them up due to her injury. Emergency volunteers may be able to provide some support.