

Flood Protection Information

Coastal Storm Surges. The major risk in the City of Nome is from coastal storm surges. These storm surges have wreaked havoc on the city many times in the past and will do so again. Mitigation measures can be taken to lessen the impact of these storms. The storms in addition to destroying property and potentially risking lives also cause significant shoreline erosion problems.

The Nome coastline is subject to positive storm surges due to its exposure to a long southwest fetch. Contributing to surge are the effects of the Bering Sea, Norton Sound, and mildly sloping shallow depths, which amplify surges. Positive surges are distinguished from negative storm surges as an increase in water level from the normal tidal elevation as compared to a decrease. A storm surge consists of the water surface response to wind-induced surface shear stress and pressure fields. Storm-induced surges can produce short-term increases in water levels to an elevation considerably above mean levels.

Shoreline Erosion. These storm-induced waves cause the destructive erosion of the coastal areas. The seawall protects most of Front Street, but unprotected coastal areas are susceptible to eroding.

Snake River. At the time the Flood Insurance Study and Flood Insurance Rate Maps were prepared in 1983 by the U.S. Corps of Engineers for FEMA, there was no documentation of river flooding along the Snake River. While there was no official documentation people who lived in the area have noted that during the flood of 1974 the airport road and the airport were under water.

Ice override. Ice override may occur when storm wind conditions are coupled with sufficient open water. Norton Sound is usually an ice factory for the Bering Sea because the prevailing strong northeasterly winds generate offshore winds that carry newly formed ice out to sea. Ice is driven into Nome when southerly winds hit the area, a comparatively rare event. The winds responsible for ice motion arrive from the southeast and are most likely to occur in November and December. Southwesterly winds are comparatively rare (less than 2.5 percent) but could cause substantial harm given the large fetch in that direction.

Your property may be high enough that it was not flooded recently. However, it can still be flooded in the future because the next flood could be worse. If you are in the floodplain, the odds are that someday your property will be damaged. This flyer gives you some ideas of what you can do to protect yourself.

City Flood Services: The first thing you should do is check your flood hazard. Flood maps and flood protection references are available at the Nome Building Permit Inspector's Office at 404 West 4th Street. You can visit the Building Inspector to see if you are in a mapped floodplain. If so, you can get you more information, such as depth of flooding over a building's first floor and past flood problems in the area. They also have a handout on whether you need to purchase flood insurance.

If requested, the Building Permit Inspector's Office will visit a property to review its flood problem and explain ways to stop flooding or prevent flood damage. Call the Building Inspector at 443-6511. These services are free. If you are in a floodplain or have had a flood, drainage or sewer backup problem, check out these sources of assistance.

What You Can Do: Several of the City's efforts depend on your cooperation and assistance. Here is how you can help:

- Do not dump or throw anything into the ditches or streams.
- Always check with the Building Inspector before you build on, alter, regrade, or fill on your property. A permit may be needed to ensure that projects do not cause problems on other properties.
- If you see building or filling without a City permit sign posted, contact the Building Inspector at 443-6511, Check out the following information on floodproofing, flood insurance and flood safety.

Floodproofing: There are several different ways to protect a building from flood damage. One way is to keep the water away by regrading your lot or building a small floodwall or earthen berm. These methods work if your lot is large enough, if flooding is not too deep, and if your property is not in the floodway. The Building Inspector can provide this information.

Another approach is to make your walls waterproof and place watertight closures over the doorways.

A third approach is to raise the house above flood levels.

These measures are called floodproofing or retrofitting. More information is available at the Nome Public Library.

Important note: Any alteration to your building or land requires a permit from the Building Inspector. Even regrading or filling in the floodplain requires a permit. If you know a flood is coming, you should shut off the gas and electricity and move valuable contents upstairs. It is unlikely that you will get much warning, so a detailed checklist prepared in advance would help ensure that you don't forget anything.

Flood Insurance: If you don't have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. However, because Nome participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, you can purchase a separate flood insurance policy. This insurance is backed by the Federal government and is available to everyone, even for properties that have been flooded.

Some people have purchased flood insurance because it was required by the bank when they got a mortgage or home improvement loan. Usually these policies just cover the building's structure and not the contents.

Don't wait for the next flood to buy insurance in Nome. If you are covered, check out the amount and protection. There is a 30-day waiting period before the National Flood Insurance Program coverage takes effect. Contact your insurance agent for more information on rates and coverages.

Remember: Even if the last flood missed you or you have done some flood-proofing, the the next flood could be worse. Flood insurance information on rates and coverage.

covers all surface floods.

Flood Safety

Do not walk through flowing water. Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths, mostly during flash floods. Currents can be deceptive; six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still there.

Do not drive through a flooded area. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Don't drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out.

Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. The number two flood killer after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to the Nome Joint Utilities System or Nome City Hall.

Have your electricity turned off by the Nome Joint Utilities System. Some appliances, such as television sets, keep electrical charges even after they have been unplugged. Don't use appliances or motors that have gotten wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned, and dried.

Look out for animals. Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to poke and turn things over and scare away small animals.

Look before you step. After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.

Be alert for gas leaks. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns, or open flames unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.