

Hurricane Flooding: A Deadly Inland Danger



Hurricane Floyd Courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, J. Jordan

"In the last 30 years, inland flooding has been responsible for more than half the deaths associated with tropical cyclones in the United States."

Ed Rappaport
National Hurricane Center

Consider the following:

When it comes to hurricanes, wind speeds do not tell the whole story. Hurricanes produce storm surges, tornadoes, and often the most deadly of all -- inland flooding.

While storm surge is always a potential threat, more people have died from inland flooding in the last 30 years. Intense rainfall is not directly related to the wind speed of tropical cyclones. In fact, some of the greatest rainfall amounts occur from weaker storms that drift slowly or stall over an area.



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Inland flooding can be a major threat to communities hundreds of miles from the coast as intense rain falls from these huge tropical air masses.

The United States has a significant hurricane problem. More than 60% of our Nation's population live in coastal states from Maine to Texas, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Floyd (1999) brought intense rains and record flooding to the Eastern U.S. Of the 56 people who perished, 50 drowned due to inland flooding.



Hurricane Floyd Courtesy of NASA/GSFC

Tropical Storm Alberto (1994) drifted over the Southeast United States and produced torrential rainfall. More than 21 inches of rain fell at Americus, Georgia. Thirty-three people drowned. Damages exceeded \$750 million.

Tropical Storm Claudette (1979) brought 45 inches of rain to an area near Alvin, Texas, contributing to more than \$600 million in damages.

Hurricane Agnes (1972) produced floods in the Northeast United States which contributed to 122 deaths and \$6.4 billion in damages. Long after the winds from Hurricane Diane (1955) subsided, the storm brought inland flooding to Pennsylvania, New York, and New England contributing to nearly 200 deaths and \$4.2 billion in damages.

So, the next time you hear hurricane -- think inland flooding!

What can you do?

- When you hear hurricane, think inland flooding.
- Determine whether you live in a potential flood zone.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Keep abreast of road conditions through the news media.
- Move to a safe area before access is cut off by flood water.
- Do not attempt to cross flowing water. As little as six inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle...two feet of water will carry most cars away.
- Develop a flood emergency action plan with your community leaders.

For more information contact:
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Office of Climate, Water and Weather Services
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