

PROPERTY PROTECTION MEASURES

If your property is susceptible to flooding, there are many flood damage reduction measures you can employ.

- Apply watertight seals to protect your building against low level flooding.
- Elevate utilities such as heating and air conditioning systems, water heaters and other major appliances to elevations above the flooding threat.
- Move furniture and other valuables to higher floors.
- Elevate or relocate the structure out of the flood hazard area.

FLOODPLAIN PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

You must obtain a permit for development activities located in the 100 year floodplain. Application must be made prior to doing any work in a floodplain area. The LaSalle County Environmental Services Department issues these permits for the unincorporated areas of the County. Please contact this Department to receive information required to properly develop in the floodplain or to inquire about other development activities occurring in floodplain areas.

LaSalle County Environmental Services Dept.
119 W. Madison Street-Room 107
Ottawa, Illinois
815-434-8666

FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

LaSalle County has three major rivers flowing through it. Flooding occurs along all of these major rivers as well as many of their tributaries. The major rivers in LaSalle County include: the Fox River, Illinois River, and Vermilion River. Some of the tributaries having mapped floodways in LaSalle County are: First Creek, Clark's Run Creek, Goose Creek, Rat Run Creek, Prairie Creek, Coal Run Creek, and the Illinois & Michigan Canal.

Other waterways having substantial amounts of floodplain acreage along their banks in LaSalle County include: Indian Creek, Little Indian Creek, Somonauk Creek, Little Vermilion River, and Covel Creek to name a few.

Flash-flooding is the general type of flooding occurring along LaSalle County waterways. Typically on the smaller local streams, flooding will occur and recede rapidly after heavy rainfall events. While in the larger watersheds, the rivers will come up slower and recede slower than in the smaller stream watersheds. These larger river systems are largely effected by land use and weather conditions and events taking place over a much larger geographical area.

Information on whether your property is in the 100-year floodplain can be obtained by coming into the LaSalle County Environmental Services and Land Use Department to view floodplain maps. These maps are available to look at as well as other flood-related information. LaSalle County also has elevation certificates for recent development occurring in floodplains in the unincorporated areas of the County. For further information, the LaSalle County Environmental Services and Land Use Department can be contacted at (815) 434-8666.

LaSalle County (Unincorporated) Flood Information

FLOOD SAFETY

The following common sense guidelines can help you from the dangers of flooding:

- Do not drive through a flooded area. More people drown in cars than any where else. Do not drive around barriers.
- Do not walk through flowing water. Currents can be deceptive. Six inches of water can knock you off your feet.
- Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. If your house is about to be flooded, turn off the power at the service box. Electrical current can travel through water. Electrocution is the 2nd leading cause of death during floods.
- Be alert to gas leaks. Turn off the gas to your house before it floods. If you smell gas, report it to a Village official or your gas company. Do not use candles, lanterns or open flames if you smell gas or are unsure if your gas has been shut off.
- Keep children away from the flood waters, ditches, culverts and storm drains. Flood waters can carry unimaginable items that have dislodged themselves. Culverts may suck smaller people into them rendering them helpless.
- Clean everything that has been wet. Flood water will be contaminated with sewage and other chemicals which pose severe health threats.
- Look out for animals, especially snakes. Small animals that have been flooded out of their home may seek shelter in yours.
- Do not use gas engines, such as generators, or charcoal fires indoors during power outages. Carbon monoxide exhaust can pose serious health hazards.

SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT/DAMAGE

The NFIP requires that if the cost of improvements to a building or the cost to repair damages (from any cause) to a building exceeds 50% of the market value of the building (excluding land value), the entire building must be brought up to current floodplain management standards. Building improvement projects include exterior and interior remodeling, rehabilitation, additions and repair and reconstruction projects. Additionally, the cost of currently planned improvements will be added to the cost of previously made improvements and compared to the existing market value to determine if the improvements exceed 50% of the structure's value. Please contact the LaSalle County Environmental Services and Land Use Department at (815) 434-8666 for further information.

FLOOD INSURANCE

If you do not have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Most homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. Flood insurance is only available to those participating communities in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Because of our floodplain management programs that attempt to protect us from the multiple flooding hazards, LaSalle County is part of the NFIP and thus, residents are able to obtain flood insurance. Additionally, because LaSalle County participates in FEMA's CRS program, flood insurance premiums are discounted.

Be sure to check your policy to ensure you have adequate coverage. Usually these policies cover the building structure, but not the contents. Contents coverage can also be obtained by asking. There is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance coverage becomes effective. Plan ahead; do not wait until a flood is predicted before purchasing flood insurance.

NATURAL & BENEFICIAL FUNCTIONS

Floodplains play a valuable role in providing natural and beneficial functions in LaSalle County. Floodplains that are relatively undisturbed provide a wide range of benefits to both human and natural ecosystems. Floodplains are unique ecosystems that buffer and provide the transition between land and water. These areas help to filter run-off from various land uses, which in turn helps to maintain bio-diversity and ecosystem sustainability, both locally and downstream. Floodplains contain historic and archeological sites that provide opportunity for education and study. Floodplains enhance waterfowl, fish and other wildlife habitats and provide feeding/breeding grounds. And lastly, floodplains provide natural erosion control and open space to prevent further flooding damage.

DRAINAGE SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

As simple as it may sound, simply keeping smaller ditches and streams free of debris can dramatically improve the run-off capacity of low-lying areas, as well as greatly reduce the occurrence of blockage that significantly contributes to flooding. It is illegal to dump materials into a required waterway and violators may be fined. If you see someone in the act of dumping or see debris in one of our watercourses, please contact the Environmental Services Department at (815) 434-8666.

FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM

Many times flooding along the Illinois River, Fox River, and Vermillion River can be predicted days in advance, giving ample warning for preparation and evacuation. However, in the event of a flash flood due to a large rain event, you may be the first to notice the oncoming situation and have only hours to execute your plan. Notify the LaSalle County Emergency Management Office and/or the LaSalle County Sheriff's Department will help initiate flooding preparation and procedure. It is also recommended to tune into local radio and TV stations to hear updates and to stay abreast of flooding locations and conditions within the area.

WHAT IS A FLOODPLAIN?

A floodplain is an area with water and ground surface elevations at or below the base flood or the 100-year frequency flood elevation. Floodplains may also include detached special flood hazard areas, ponding areas, etc. The floodplain is also known as the special flood hazard area (SFHA). The floodplains are those lands within the jurisdiction of the county that are subject to inundation by the base flood or 100-year frequency flood.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you should require further information regarding flood-related issues in LaSalle County, check out these additional sources:

- LaSalle County Environmental Services
815-434-8666
- LaSalle County Emergency Management Agency
815-433-5622
- FEMA www.fema.gov
- Floodsmart www.floodsmart.gov
- Floodplain Maps
LaSalle County Env Serv. Dept. (hard copy)
FEMA GeoPlatform (online)
fema.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html