

# Environment Agency launches campaign to tackle flood apathy

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The Environment Agency is warning that too many people are ignoring the risk of flooding in this country. A study by BMRB Social Research has revealed alarming levels of complacency among households at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea, despite the increasing frequency of flooding at home and abroad.

Barbara Young, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said: "Although we're unlikely to see flooding in the UK like that caused by the Boxing Day tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, there is still a significant flood threat here from extreme rainfall and coastal surges.

"Devastating floods do happen here too, like those in Autumn 2000, and more recently in Boscastle and Carlisle. There's a tendency for people to think "it'll never happen to me". The fact is, it could, we just don't know when. People in this cannot afford to be complacent about flood risk."

Five million people in two million properties in England and Wales live in flood risk areas, yet despite this, BMRB research indicates that as many as two fifths (41%) of these people are still unaware of the threat.

On the fifth anniversary of the Autumn 2000 floods, some of the worst to hit England and Wales, the Environment Agency is launching an eye-catching advertising campaign in the national and local press to remind people that devastating floods happen here too. The campaign will urge people to find out if they live or work in a flood risk area and how to prepare in case the worst happens this winter.

The devastating floods of Autumn 2000 caused damage to 10,000 properties and the total financial cost was over ?1.3 billion. Despite the scale of this devastation and serious floods in subsequent years (e.g. Carlisle and Boscastle), more than two thirds (69%) of those surveyed by the BMRB said they were unlikely to take measures to protect themselves and their property " despite living in a flood risk area.

The research also revealed that one third (34%) of people in flood risk areas had not checked whether their buildings and contents insurance covers flood damage and only 7% had found out how to get flood warnings. Two fifths (42%) admitted they would not know what to do in the event of a flood.

Barbara Young, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said: "Whilst we can reduce the effects of floods through awareness, education and investment in flood defences, we can never prevent them. That's why we're urging people to try to reduce the massive financial and emotional costs of flooding. So the message is: be prepared for flooding."

The Environment Agency's three steps to take to prepare for flooding:

1. Visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodline](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodline) or call our 24 hour Floodline on 0845 988 1188 to find out if you are at risk of flooding

2. Find out if flood warnings are available in your area.

3. Make sure you understand the flood warning codes so you know what to do when a flood warning is issued

If floods are imminent, people must:

• Co-operate with emergency services and local authorities " you may be evacuated

• Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies at the mains. Find out where these are well in advance of any flood

• Put plugs into sinks and weigh them down with something heavy

• Move sentimental items like photographs upstairs and think about storing them more safely in future in case you forget or don't have time to move them during a flood

• Move as many possessions upstairs as you can

For further information please visit: <http://www.bmr.co.uk/>