

Stop the flood before it starts

Here are some steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of basement flooding.

What you can do outside the house

Seal cracks or openings in walls, floors, windows and foundations, and seal all window wells.

Clear gutters and downspouts of leaves and other debris that prevent proper drainage.

Make sure your downspouts are draining properly, ideally six to eight feet from your foundation's walls.

Ensure the grading around your home slopes away from the foundation wall to help drain water away from your home (without negatively affecting neighboring properties).

Increase the green space around your home with native plants and shrubs and install porous pavement to help absorb rainwater and melted snow.

Repair/replace damaged sump pumps.

Clear debris from roadside catchbasins (grates) to help water enter the stormdrain. (If it is safe to do so.)

Ensure drainage swales (shallow ditch) between properties are maintained and clear of obstructions.

What you can do inside the house

Ensure that your plumbing and drainage systems are in good working condition.

Part of reducing the risk of basement floods is to understand how your plumbing and foundation drainage systems work and how to maintain them. Every home is different and homes over time have been built with different building practices and building codes. Some of what you should know about your home includes:

Know the location and condition of your sewer lateral (the pipe that connects the plumbing in your home to the main line on the street or your septic tank).

Find out if you have a footing drain discharging to a storm sewer lateral (pipe) and if so the location and condition of it.

Find out if you have a sump pump, and if so, how to maintain it. Understand what is needed to keep a sump pump operational during power outages.

Find out if you have footing drains and if so, their condition and where they are connected. (A footing drain perforated pipe that runs around the perimeter of your foundation to intercept groundwater. The footing drain gives the groundwater a place to go. Where it goes depends on the type of foundation drainage system your home has.

To understand some of these elements of your home, you may want to hire a licensed plumber who can conduct specialized testing or inspection, often through video camera inspection.

Once you understand your plumbing and drainage systems, you also have to maintain them.

Fix cracks, blockages or other condition problems.

Avoiding creating clogs:

Toilets are not for trash. Do not flush down the toilet items such as dental floss, personal care products (including "flushable" wipes), condoms, tampons, razor blades or anything which can block the sanitary pipe.

Seal cracks or openings in walls, floors, windows and foundations, and seal all window wells.