



FLASH FLOODS

USDA Forest Service - Cherokee National Forest

2015

* Community Alert

Your Safety is Your Responsibility:

- Remember, city sirens don't exist in nature.
- Monitor weather forecasts, prior to visiting and during your visit to remote areas.

FLASH FLOOD DANGERS

A flash flood is a serious weather event for forest visitors because rising flood water is extremely dangerous—a sudden surge can claim victims in less than one minute.

Any intense, heavy rain that falls in a short amount of time can create flash flood conditions in a low-lying area, according to the National Weather Service, and it can happen at a moment's notice any time of the year.

"Many of our neighbours like to camp overnight in the forest," explained Cherokee National Forest Supervisor JaSal Morris. "Sometimes visitors camp in low-lying areas because they spent the day along a stream. But a sudden rush of water toward their camp site would put them in immediate danger."

During a flash flood, rapidly rising water can reach heights of 30 feet or more. The velocity of a flood surge can easily roll boulders and vehicles, tear out trees, destroy bridges and undermine roads.

A low-lying area can become a death trap in a matter of minutes.

"There is very little time to react," Supervisor Morris said. "Forest visitors need to be more conscious about sudden storms. Families should discuss how they would alert each other and climb to safety if rushing water arrives."

Weather experts say the best defence is to be weather-ready before a storm hits.

Don't hesitate to postpone your travel plans if weather forecasts are unfavorable.

Your Safety is your responsibility!



Be Prepared



Statistics show that most flash floods in the U.S. occur after dark, when campers are asleep or inactive.

National forests are popular places to sleep under the stars. People from nearby communities come camping all year. Visitors need to be weather-ready every time they visit the forest.

When a flash flood strikes at night, it's nearly impossible to know how deep and fast the water is.

It's noisy. It's dark. And it's disorienting to wake up suddenly during a storm.

You have to act quickly!



Safety Check List

Know your area's flood risks. Monitor the NOAA weather radio all hazards bulletins, or your local news stations for vital weather information.

Stay alert for signs of heavy rain (thunder and lightning), both where you are and upstream.

Watch for rising water levels.

If flooding occurs, get to higher ground. Leave low-lying areas immediately.

Don't try to outrun a flash flood in your car. Climb to safety immediately.

Avoid areas already flooded, especially if the water is flowing fast. Do not attempt to cross flowing streams. Remember: turn around; don't drown.

Don't try to swim to safety; wait for rescuers to come to you.

Be especially cautious at night, when it is harder to recognize and respond to danger.

Don't hesitate to postpone travel plans if weather conditions are unfavorable.

Visit <http://www.noaa.gov/> for weather updates and for driving tips: <http://preview.weather.com/ready/checklists/drivingChecklist.html>

When possible, carry a NOAA weather radio.



Flash Flood Watches & Warnings

Flash floods can occur between hills, near small streams or in any low area. Small streams can become raging rivers with the strength to roll boulders and vehicles, tear out trees and wash away bridges. A flash flood can unleash deadly force in minutes.

Always consult the National Weather Service forecast before visiting a national forest. Consider postponing your visit when inclement weather is forecasted.

A National Weather Service flash flood **watch** means threatening weather is possible in the area. A flash flood **warning** means you may have only seconds to escape.

During a weather event, a flash flood watch or warning will be broadcast on the news and transmitted on weather radios. Also, cell phones can receive wireless emergency alerts--a personal warning about imminent threats like

flash floods. Consumers can sign up to receive imminent threat alerts from their cellular carrier, or install a weather alert app on a smart phone.

Remember, flash floods develop so rapidly that you may not get a warning. Any time a warning is issued, climb to safety immediately. Do not remain in a low-lying area.

