

# 25

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER



**Royal Life Saving**

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY - AUSTRALIA

FACT SHEET No.25

# Flooding



## Q. How many people die from flooding in Australia?

A. Flooding is the most common natural disaster in Australia and causes great loss of life. A study by FitzGerald (2010) found that between 1997 and 2008, at least 73 people died as a direct result of floods.

## Q. Why is flooding so dangerous?

A. Flooding and flood waters are dangerous and can increase your risk of drowning for a number of reasons: conditions can change quickly (e.g. flash flooding), there can be strong currents, it is often difficult to tell the speed of the current, water visibility can change hiding hazards, as well as animals such as snakes and crocodiles being washed into the water.

## Q. What is flash flooding?

A. Flash flooding is flooding that develops very quickly from short, intense bursts of rainfall such as from severe storms. Sometimes the onset of flash flooding comes before the end of heavy rains. Swift action is essential to the protection of life and property as water levels can rise extremely quickly, in some cases rising metres in minutes. Some flash flooding occurs away from where the rain fell, thus creating a false sense of safety. Always keep an eye on the water level when in, on or near rivers and go to safety as quickly as possible if the water level starts to rise.

## Q. What can I do to keep myself safe?

A. The majority of fatalities associated with flooding were of people trying to cross flooded waterways in motor vehicles and engaging in high risk behaviour during floods (such as jumping into flooded rivers, riding boogie / surf boards on the water, and swimming in flood water). If waterways are flooded, do not enter or drive through it. You can also increase your safety by wearing a life jacket.

## Q. Why is it dangerous to drive through flood waters?

A. Not only can floodwaters conceal objects, but floodwaters can also conceal the quality of the road, which may have been weakened or even washed away. Drivers also underestimate the amount and force of water that is needed to displace a car. An average car is 6-8m squared in surface area and requires only 10-20cm of water above the bottom of the chassis to cause the car to float and be washed away.

## Real Life Story - Family Flood Tragedy

Eight people have drowned in New South Wales during widespread flooding caused by storms. In a tragic incident, five members of the one family were swept into a swollen creek when the submerged road they were driving on collapsed beneath their car and their vehicle fell into a waterway. Royal Life Saving again warns all Australians to never drive across or swim in flood waters due to the hidden dangers they pose.

**ROYAL LIFE SAVING HAS DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF FACT SHEETS ON WATER SAFETY ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA.**

Contact Royal Life Saving on: **1300 737 763**  
or download them from: **www.keepwatch.com.au**

## Flooding Checklist:

- Never drive through flood waters
- Never swim in flooded waterways
- Never ride on a boogie / surf boards in flood waters
- Wherever possible wear a life jacket when in, on, or around flood waters
- If conducting a rescue avoid getting in the water yourself
- When swimming in natural waterways after floods be aware that conditions of the waterway may have changed dramatically since the last time you swam there
- After floods, always check the water before entry and enter slowly feet first
- If the river level rises go to safety as quickly as possible as flash flooding may occur

**NEVER DRIVE ACROSS OR SWIM IN FLOOD WATERS**

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