

# A Guide to the Role of Community Flood Wardens



## What is a Community Flood Warden Scheme?

Community Flood Warden schemes are completely voluntary, and can consist of a single person or several people acting as volunteers to help raise awareness of any flood risks in their community, help pass on flood warnings when they are issued, help prepare for flooding and to help vulnerable people both during and after flooding has occurred. A Community Flood Warden may also be part of another group such as Neighbourhood Watch or the Parish Council.

Community Flood Wardens are an important part of the local community, but can also play a key role in assisting the Environment Agency, water authority, local and county councils with local information on flood conditions. For example; before or during a potential



flooding event the Community Flood Wardens may be contacted to give an account of ground conditions, water levels, weather, etc, to help the Emergency Planning team and Environment Agency activate relevant plans and to coordinate an appropriate response across the county.

Community Flood Wardens may notice or have been given information about a blocked watercourse, culvert, drain or burst pipe. The Community Flood Warden should then report this to the relevant agency so that the necessary remedial action is carried out. By doing this, watercourses will be kept flowing unobstructed thus reducing the risk of local flooding.

### **Locally appointed Community Flood Wardens are important because:**

- Local people will know the Community Flood Warden personally, leading to mutual trust and understanding.
- Local people are more likely to accept warnings and advice which are reinforced by a familiar local person.
- A local Community Flood Warden would be familiar with those people and properties at risk. They could distribute leaflets on flood warning and emergency response arrangements to properties at risk of flooding and ensure people receive and understand them.
- A local Community Flood Warden would be able to provide the Environment Agency and Local Resilience Forum (LRF) with local information during a flood event and confirm conditions on the ground. An important two way information link would be established.

### **Community Flood Wardens can:**

- Encourage communities to help themselves with training and support from the Environment Agency, local and county councils and emergency services.
- Develop good local communication links with other local groups for passing out information and receiving feedback.
- Help build partnerships which would bring improvements in flood preparedness and response such as with Neighbourhood Watch and Parish Councils.



## What would a Community Flood Warden do?

The role of the Community Flood Warden is primarily one of communication, and there are many ways in which a Community Flood Warden can help their local community in times of flood. These include:

- Assist with the creation and maintenance of the Community Flood Plan with the Environment Agency and councils.
- Monitor the condition of local drains, culverts, brooks and other watercourses and report any defects or blockages to the appropriate agency.
- Distributing flood related information to the public.
- Encouraging individuals to sign up to the Environment Agency free flood warning service, Floodline Warnings Direct (FWD) where available.
- Making arrangements to reinforce flood warnings when they are issued.
- Visit people at risk to ensure that warnings have been received.
- Call for assistance on behalf of people who are struggling to carry out essential actions to safeguard themselves or their property.
- Have local knowledge and information on the latest flood situation (the Environment Agency will help with this).
- Liaise with the Environment Agency, councils and emergency services on local conditions and needs on the ground.
- Note and report local flood event details.
- If possible set up local patrols to monitor the situation.



## What must a Community Flood Warden never do?

Community Flood Wardens should never place themselves in a position where their own personal safety is at risk.

In particular they should not –

- Enter any flood water whatsoever.
- Put themselves at risk to attempt any form of rescue operation.
- Attempt to clear blocked drains, gullies, ditches or watercourses.

They should always call the emergency services or the relevant agency to deal with such situations.

## **What equipment does a Community Flood Warden need?**

Community Flood Wardens are issued with several things to assist them in their role and to identify them as Community Flood Wardens.

- A high visibility vest clearly marked “Flood Warden”.
- A Community Flood Plan, created in partnership with the Environment Agency and council, containing: -
  - A detailed map of areas at risk of flooding.
  - Lists of names, addresses and telephone numbers of vulnerable people and properties within risk areas.
  - Contact details of all relevant agencies and emergency services.
- Correspondence, leaflets and information relating to Flood Warning arrangements (for issuing to local residents and businesses).

## **Other support that can be provided at ground level**

The Community Flood Warden and/or Parish/Town/Ward Council could also: -

- Consider enlisting able bodied personnel to assist with helping people in their homes, especially the elderly, disabled and those awaiting evacuation.

And

- Be aware of those in the community who have access to tractors, pumps, boats, generators, winching equipment and 4-wheel drive vehicles.

## Flood Warning Service

The Environment Agency provides a flood warning service for most main rivers, estuaries and along the coast. It cannot provide a service for all watercourses. Rivers and streams that rise rapidly in response to rainfall cause particular difficulties because there is insufficient time to issue specific warnings. In some localities a general warning service is provided; in others it is not possible to provide a warning service at all. The Environment Agency does not provide a warning service in respect of local flooding from sewers, road drainage, overland flow, dam bursts or blockages.

More information about the Environment Agency flood warning service can be found here: [www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood](http://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood)

Using the latest available technology, our staff monitors rainfall, river levels and sea conditions 24 hours a day and use this information to forecast the possibility of flooding. If flooding is forecast, we issue warnings using a set of three different warning types, shown to the right.

Floodline Warnings Direct (FWD) is a free service which sends you a direct message when flooding is expected and may affect your property. Flood warnings will give you time to prepare for flooding which could save you time, money and heartache. You can receive warnings by telephone, mobile, email, SMS text message or fax, whichever you prefer.

You can sign up for Floodline Warnings Direct by calling **Floodline** on **0345 988 1188** or **0845 988 1188** or online at [www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings)



**FLOOD ALERT**  
FLOODING IS POSSIBLE. BE PREPARED.



**FLOOD WARNING**  
FLOODING IS EXPECTED. IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED.

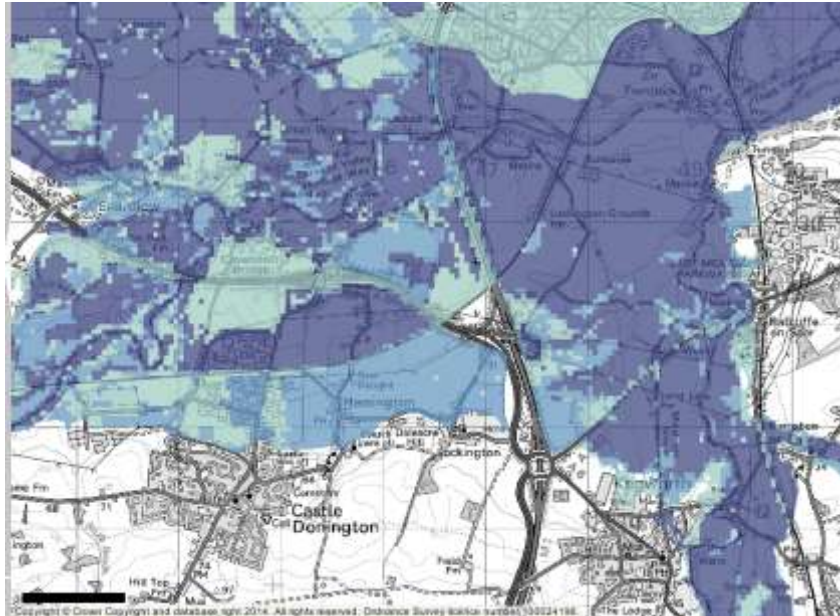


**SEVERE FLOOD  
WARNING**  
SEVERE FLOODING. DANGER TO LIFE.

## Flood Risk and Flood Maps

The Flood Map is a multi-layered map which provides information on flooding from rivers and the sea for England. The Flood Map takes into account areas that benefit from flood defences.

The map is available from our website, [www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood](http://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood).



### What does the Flood Map show?

The map shows the likelihood of flooding for rivers and the sea in any given year.

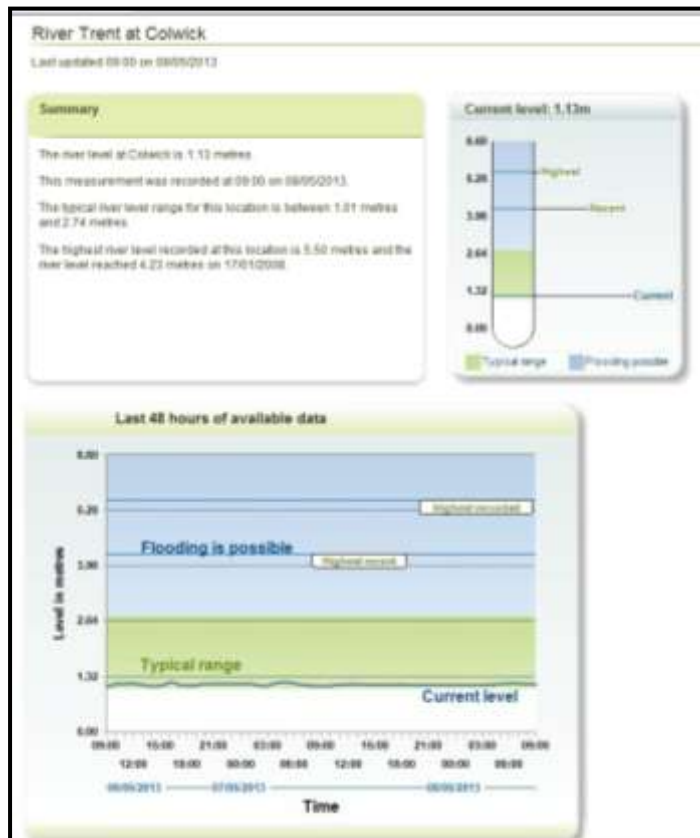
<b>High</b>	Greater than or equal to 1 in 30 (3.3%) chance in any given year
<b>Medium</b>	Less than 1 in 30 (3.3%) but greater than or equal to 1 in 100 (1%) chance in any given year
<b>Low</b>	Less than 1 in 100 (1%) but greater than or equal to 1 in 1000 (0.1%) chance in any given year
<b>Very Low</b>	Less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%) chance in any given year.

You will also find maps on our website that show the risk to an area from surface water and reservoir flooding. Surface water flooding is managed by your lead local flood authority and reservoir flooding by your local authority.

## River and Sea Levels Online

We know that many people and businesses need good, up to date information about river and sea levels. We offer you easy to access online river and sea level information from monitoring stations across England. Visit our website, [www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding](http://www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding), to access the information.

To help us do this we have monitoring stations across England where we measure the levels of rivers, lakes, sea and groundwater. We also measure the flows of rivers and the amount of rainfall we get. Most of the river and sea level measurements are taken electronically and automatically sent to our databases used by our forecasting systems. These water level measurements will be also sent straight to our website and published online. The information will be updated daily, and in some cases, when water levels are high, the information may be updated more regularly.



The river level 'thermometer', shown left, tells you the latest water level at a particular point. It also includes information to help you put this in context, such as the highest level recorded and the level where flooding is possible. There is also a written summary of the data, including the date and time of the last published river level.

The recent water level graph shows the water levels over the last 48 hours, along with information to help put these in context. You will also find information about the monitoring station where the measurements have been taken, including its name and the river it is on.



## **Flood Warning and Emergency Response: a wider picture**

A major flooding incident is one which involves the flooding of a significant number of properties, or significant disruption to key parts of the local infrastructure.

The response to flooding involves several organisations performing key roles at the local level to be fully integrated and effective.

The response also requires special arrangements being put into place by one or more of the emergency services, the local authority and the Environment Agency.

Examples of these special arrangements may consist of the activation of Major Incident Plans, opening of Emergency Rest Centres and the co-ordination of voluntary services such as the British Red Cross and WRVS.

Here is a brief guide to the different agencies who may become involved in a major flood incident and the role each will play:

### ***The Environment Agency***

- Is responsible for flood defences and the issuing of flood warnings in England.
- Provides the Floodline (03459 88 11 88 or 08459 88 11 88) service.

### ***The Met Office***

- Provides weather forecasts, including severe weather alerts.
- Work with the Environment Agency at the Flood Forecasting Centre to provide a flood risk forecast.

### ***Lead Local Flood Authority***

- Generally are County Councils and Unitary Authorities.
- Prepare and maintain a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas.
- Investigate significant local flooding incidents and publish the results of such investigations.
- Play a lead role in emergency planning and recovery after a flood event.

### ***Local Authorities***

- Set up rest centres for people evacuated from their homes and arrange temporary accommodation.
- Deal with road closures caused by overflowing drains and sewers.

### ***The Police***

- Co-ordinate the emergency services in a major flood incident and help with evacuation of people from their homes where necessary.

### ***The Fire and Rescue Service***

- Is responsible primarily for rescue, recovery and saving life.
- May (subject to operational requirements) pump out flood water. [There may be a charge to householders for this service].

### ***The Ambulance Service***

- Is primarily responsible for saving life.

### ***Community Flood Wardens***

- Passing on flood warning information received from the Environment Agency.
- Reporting problems with local watercourses which may cause flooding.
- Represent the local community in flood related matters.

### ***Internal Drainage Boards***

- Are responsible for providing a flood protection and water-level management service within the statutory drainage districts.
- Have powers to undertake works on any watercourse within its district, other than a 'main river'.
- Advise on developing flood conditions.

### ***Canal and River Trust***

- Protect their own structures.
- Along with other bodies, help warn the public about flood risk from their own navigation system such as canals and canalised rivers.
- May provide specialist equipment, materials and other resources as appropriate by local agreement.

### ***Public Utility Companies***

- Secure their services and equipment to ensure continuity of supply.
- Repair services disrupted by flood events.
- Provide alternative means of supply during disruption if life and health risks are identified such as drinking water bowsers.
- Advise local authorities and the media when disrupted services will be re-instated.

### ***The Media***

- Issue flood warnings received from the Environment Agency to agreed standards.
- Issue updated information during a flood event.
- Issue 'All Clear' Messages received from the Environment Agency to agreed standards.

### ***Citizens Advice Bureau***

- Can give advice on how to obtain money in an emergency.
- Help to deal with insurance queries.

### ***Voluntary Services***

- Can assist in staffing emergency rest centres.
- Can assist in providing refreshments and support for the emergency services.
- Can assist in many other ways depending on which charity/voluntary organisations are involved.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Environment Agency  
Trentside Offices  
Scarrington Road  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham  
NG2 5FA

Incident Hotline      **0800 80 70 60**  
General Enquiries      **03708 506 506**  
Floodline              **0345 988 1188**

**Police (non-emergencies):**                      **101**

**Severn Trent Water:**                              **0800 783 4444**

**Anglian Water:**                                      **08457 145 145**

**Gas (National Grid):**                              **0800 111 999**

**Electricity (Western Power Distribution)**      **0800 056 8090**

**NHS 111 (Formerly NHS Direct):**              **111 (where available)**

Other Useful Numbers		
Name	Organisation	Contact Number

## Notes