

Flood Preparation and Response

With storm damage and flooding becoming commonplace in New Jersey, many environmental commissions are looking for ways to take effective action on community flood issues.

The Environmental Commission's Role in Flood Preparation and Response

In addition to Environmental Commissions participation in land use planning discussions about dunes and building in floodplains, commissions can educate residents and businesses in flood-prone areas about actions to take to reduce the environmental impacts of flooding.

ANJEC created an 8-page booklet called ["Reducing Environmental Impacts of Flooding – Local Advice for Businesses and Residents in Flood Areas."](#) Commissions can customize the booklet with local information and print it out on 8 ½" x 11" paper for distribution to residents and businesses in flood areas as part of an outreach campaign.

Flood-Related Activities for Environmental Commissions:

1. Meet with the local officials, water utilities, hold an informational forum to disseminate information about the recent legislative ruling on Stormwater Utilities. Stormwater utilities can be used as a tool for managing flooding and water pollution. A utility is responsible for the funding, construction and maintenance of a management system for polluted rainwater runoff. Learn more about storm water utilities [here](#).
2. Meet with the local officials and emergency services and agencies that have a role in flood management in your town. Find out what they do pre- and post-flood, and what the problems and gaps are in flood planning and response. Talk about what kinds of outreach the EC can do to residents and business owners that will help to reduce environmental impacts from flooding.
3. Develop or customize "environmental flood preparation" outreach materials for residents and businesses. Discuss how to distribute to the relevant properties and people, and how often to reinforce the information, especially to new floodplain residents.
4. Offer and/or promote regular programs for toxics collection/disposal, electronics recycling and well testing. Try to collaborate with or piggyback on programs of other organizations (county recycling, watershed associations, private firms, etc.) and make it a regular focus for floodplain residents.
5. Discuss what post-flood activities, if any, the Commission might want to get involved in, such as pickup of household hazardous and electronics wastes and other items that should be kept out of the regular trash stream. Organize these in collaboration with local officials, to avoid post-flood security issues or 'turf battles.'
6. Consider offering help with informal inspections of basements, garages, yards and trash areas to point out toxics that could be disposed of or relocated. For plumbing backflow and septic situations, partner with the plumbing inspector or other qualified person.

7. Work with municipal officials to establish a process when a flood is predicted for emptying of public trash cans and removal of other items that could become a problem in a flood. The municipality needs to have a plan for its own facilities, as well as for residents.
8. Offer a workshop on flood-resistant landscaping. For coastal areas, this would be salt-tolerant trees, shrubs and groundcovers that would withstand inundation by seawater, to avoid the need to tear out landscaping after a flood. Collaborate with master gardeners, tree commission, cooperative extension or other experts.
9. Maintain an up-to-date directory of resources and contacts that would be important during and after a flood event, so the Commission doesn't have to scramble in times of crisis.
10. Use your website, town newsletter, media and public events (street fair, green fair, health fair, special meetings) as opportunities to distribute your information and let people know that the Environmental Commission is a community resource for environmental flood preparation. Use flood issues as a way to raise awareness of toxics, recycling, electronics waste and other issues that are important regardless of flooding.
11. Develop some case studies of people doing the right thing for environmental flood preparation and response, to use in outreach and discussions with residents and businesses.
12. Make available informational copies of the town's flood maps showing areas that are within mapped FEMA flood hazard areas; enhance with accounts of any previous flooding episodes that have affected non-mapped areas.

Flood Preparation Resources

- [*Best Management Practices to Mitigate Toxics and Implement a Greening Program for Small Manufacturing Businesses*](#) (EPA)
- [*Reducing Environmental Impacts of Flooding – Local Advice for Businesses and Residents in Flood Areas*](#) (ANJEC)
- [*Quick Tips for Small Manufacturing Businesses on Reducing Toxic Releases Related to Storm Events*](#) (EPA)