



Fairfax Police Department Flood & Emergency



Frequently asked Questions

The following are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about storms, flooding, and response protocols.

When do you sound the flood siren?

The protocol is to sound the flood siren when flooding is imminent, which in Fairfax, is at 7.2 feet. When the siren is sounded, residents and merchants are advised to proceed immediately to a higher floor or to higher ground. There is also a protocol with our neighboring town San Anselmo, that if they sound their flood horn siren, Fairfax will activate our siren as well. This is despite the fact that the flood stage in Fairfax is lower than San Anselmo. However, if they are at flood stage, there is the possibility Fairfax will flood as well. The flood siren does not mean come downtown to see the creek or move merchandise to higher areas. Rising flood waters are fast moving and dangerous, and should be avoided.

Why can't you sound the flood siren earlier?

The flood siren is reserved to alert all residents and merchants that flooding is imminent. Many times during a storm the water level hovers around 5 feet, sometimes for days. Were the flood siren to be sounded each time the creek level gets to 5 feet, for example, it could be necessary to sound it repeatedly for days, diluting the message and most probably resulting in people ignoring the warning. In this age of technology, we have many other methods of notifying merchants and residents of pending storms and rainfall/creek updates.

How is the public notified of pending winter storms and flooding danger?

Our ability to notify residents and merchants of pending storms and flooding danger has improved exponentially over the last few years, since the last major flood event of 2005. This includes the Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS) (<http://www.alertmarin.org/>) operated by Marin County Office of Emergency Services (OES). Residents are encouraged to sign up for this alert notification system. We also encourage people to stay tuned to local TV and radio stations (KCBS AM 740, <http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/station/kcbs/> or WPKX 1610 AM San Anselmo) for weather updates to augment the above information.

Why can't you establish a hard and fast protocol of exactly what you are going to do and when you are going to do it in a storm situation?

There is no standard storm event. Each storm is unique as the creek reacts quite differently depending on the rate of rainfall, the ground saturation, the areas receiving the most rainfall, and the duration of the rainfall. Each storm/flooding event is different and calls have to be made for each event based on the available data to ensure an appropriate and timely response.

If I live in a flood zone and hear the siren, should I evacuate to the Pavilion?

If you are told to evacuate, follow the instructions of emergency personnel. They will tell you if you should go to the Pavilion or another shelter location. Not all shelters are open during a disaster.

Do you sound the siren for anything besides floods?

The siren was intended for flood use. However, it might be used for other emergencies such as a wild land fire. Also, the sirens are **tested** on the first Friday of every month at 11:45 AM. Between February 1st and July 31st only the Corp Yard siren is tested. The Fairfax Grade siren is not tested during the months that Spotted Owls are nesting in the area. During a test, the siren sounds for 60 seconds. During a real emergency, the siren will sound continuously until it is determined there has been adequate notification. If the siren is used for anything else, it would be coordinated along with other notification methods such as the Everbridge, TV, or radio.