



Sample Communication Templates for Floods

As you adapt flood templates for use in your city or county, keep these best practices in mind



FEMA calls flooding the most common natural disaster in the U.S., destroying homes and claiming dozens of lives each year. It doesn't take much. As little as one inch of floodwater can cause \$25,000 in property damage. Just six inches can send a river spinning out of control.

Time is of the essence when it comes to flood alerts. That's why we created the **SMS text and email templates** below. Use them as guides for your own communications efforts via OnSolve® CodeRED®. While we can't create content that addresses your community's specific needs, we can help you feel confident about getting the word out, particularly to those who face logistical challenges due to the pandemic.

Three best practices to keep in mind

- 01** Strive for clear, concise language, and don't underestimate your audience's attention span. Now, more than ever, the public wants details and will take action when you provide them.
- 02** Set the "stage" by including these essential elements in all critical event communications:
 - **Source** — State who's sending the alert*
 - **Threat** — Describe the potential danger to people and/or property
 - **Area** — Describe the impact area using street names, landmarks and boundaries
 - **Guidance** — Tell your audience what, when and how to take action
 - **Expiration** — Let your audience know when the alert expires
- 03** Practice using your templates throughout the year. The best way to know how your communication plan is working is to test it. If there are gaps or areas for improvement, testing will highlight them and help you strengthen your alerts.

*Note: We recommend emails go out under a government official's signature.

Six tips for using message templates

- 01** Does your communications strategy include voicemail? Feel free to adapt our text examples to voice alerts.
- 02** Every situation is different. Use all caps to highlight key information and modify the templated **[ALL CAPS IN BRACKETS]** to suit your situation.
- 03** Stick to one topic. You may have cases that call for more than one, like messages telling residents it's safe to return home and instructing them on how to report damage. But generally speaking, single-topic messages improve readability.
- 04** Include links or community bulletin board numbers for additional information. Encourage community members to [visit FEMA](#) to learn about their flood zone designation.
- 05** Check character count limits for your delivery channels. Twitter, SMS text and the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) all have different allowable character counts. Know their limitations before you send critical alerts.
- 06** Know your recipients' expectations. Does your community expect short, frequent updates or longer details in a single pass? Include a feedback option in your routine testing to gather insights on local delivery channels.

At OnSolve, we're always working to help keep your community safe and informed. The more you share with the citizens in your community — before, during and after a major weather event — the more lives you'll save.

Visit www.OnSolve.com to learn more.



Communications before a flood

Before a major flood, focus on precautionary alerts, reminders and restrictions. Remember, the more you share, the more likely you can save lives.



SMS Examples

The National Weather Service has issued a coastal flood alert for [COUNTY NAME] County until [DATE]. Take precautions on beaches and stay tuned for updates. More info at [WEBSITE]. Alert expires [DATE].

Flash Flood Alert. Use extreme caution and follow posted speed limits on roads. Just six inches of water can cause serious hydroplaning. Stay tuned for updates. More info at [WEBSITE]. Alert expires [DATE].

Dam Breach Threat Level I in this area until [DATE/TIME]. Check and monitor local media for updates.

Keep family and pets safe and prepare to move to higher ground or evacuate if necessary.

Review a communication plan in the event of a power outage. Alert expires [TIME].

Tidal Surge Advisory. Fast-moving waves of at least 10 feet are predicted to reach [CITY] by [TIME]. Follow directions from state and local officials and prepare to evacuate if necessary. More info: [WEBSITE]

This is a TEST of the [AGENCY NAME] emergency alerts for the upcoming flood season for [JURISDICTION NAME]. Text to enroll by sending [KEYWORD] to 99411. Forward to others. More info: [WEBSITE]



Email Examples

SUBJECT: FLOOD WATCH in effect for [JURISDICTION NAME]

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

The National Weather Service has issued a coastal flood alert for our area until [DATE].

A flood watch means changing weather conditions could bring a high potential for flash floods and tidal surges.

Please monitor local media and take precautions on roads and beaches.

More information at [WEBSITE ADDRESS].

Thank you,

SUBJECT: [JURISDICTION NAME] FLOOD ALERT

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

Flood season for our county begins on [DATE].

Storm surges from floods have the potential to destroy homes and claim lives. Just one inch of floodwater can cause \$25,000 in property damage. Take the time now to prepare your home and update your evacuation and safety plans. Visit FEMA or the CDC for flood safety tips and checklists.

Subscribe to emergency text alerts by texting [TEXT KEYWORD] to 99411.

Please feel free to forward this alert to other community members.

More information at [WEBSITE ADDRESS].

Thank you,

SUBJECT: [JURISDICTION NAME] FLOOD ALERT

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

[AGENCY NAME] has issued a FLASH FLOOD ALERT for [CITY] through [DATE].

Use extreme caution and follow posted speed limits on roads. Just six inches of water can cause serious hydroplaning. Remember to stay off bridges over fast-moving water and do not walk, swim or drive through flood waters.

For more information, please visit: [WEBSITE ADDRESS].

Thank you,

Communications during a flood

Alerts sent during a flood include evacuation and road closure information, shelter information, utility outages and other critical flood alerts. Remember, the more you share, the more lives you'll save.



SMS Examples

[ROAD NAME] at [LOCATION] is closed due to rising river levels. Stay off bridges over fast-moving water and follow detour signs at [ROAD NAME] and [ROAD NAME]. Notice expires [DATE].

CRITICAL FLOOD UPDATE: Evacuation orders are in effect in [LOCATION]. DO NOT attempt to enter evacuated areas at this time. Please cooperate with local authorities and first responders.

EVACUATE NOW! MANDATORY evacuations for [LOCATION] due to flooding at [LOCATION]. Please relocate immediately to evacuation shelter at [SHELTER ADDRESS]. More info: [WEBSITE]

MAJOR FLOOD DAMAGE at [LOCATION]. Crews currently on site. Please stay clear of area. More info to follow. [WEBSITE]

TIDAL SURGES with waves of at least 10 feet at [LOCATION]. Mandatory evacuation for north of [ROAD NAME], south of [ROAD NAME], east of [ROAD NAME] and west of [ROAD NAME]. Red Cross setting up support at [SHELTER NAME/LOCATION]. More info: [WEBSITE]



Email Examples

SUBJECT: BE READY to EVACUATE — Residents of [JURISDICTION NAME]

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

All residents, businesses and visitors along [ROAD NAMES, GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES and LANDMARKS], please PREPARE to EVACUATE. Affected areas include the communities of [AREA and COMMUNITY NAMES].

Officials are watching this developing storm and may ask you to evacuate quickly if it worsens.

Please monitor the [AGENCY NAME] website at [WEBSITE ADDRESS] and stay tuned to local media outlets for updates. Please begin preparations in the meantime, taking extra precautions with relocating anyone with special needs or moving mobile property and large animals.

The quickest route to safety is [EVACUATION ROUTE]. Shelters are in place at [EMERGENCY SHELTER NAMES AND ADDRESSES].

Visit [WEBSITE] for additional information.

Thank you,

SUBJECT: NO ENTRANCE TO EVACUATED AREAS — Residents of [JURISDICTION NAME]

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

An evacuation order is in effect for residents, businesses and visitors along [ROAD NAMES, GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES and LANDMARKS].

NO ENTRANCE IS ALLOWED INTO EVACUATED AREAS.

PLEASE COOPERATE WITH FIRST RESPONDERS.

Monitor the [AGENCY NAME] website at [WEBSITE ADDRESS] for updates. Shelters are in place at [EMERGENCY SHELTER NAMES AND ADDRESSES].

Visit [WEBSITE] for additional information.

Thank you,

SUBJECT: FLOODING AT [AREA NAME] — Residents of [JURISDICTION NAME]

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

Crews are on the scene at a major levee break at [LOCATION].

Please stay clear of the area and prepare to evacuate. There is an extremely high risk for flooding downstream, along with road and property damage.

Monitor updates at the [AGENCY NAME] website at [WEBSITE ADDRESS] as well as our social media page and local media outlets.

Thank you,

Communications after a flood

Your post-flood alerts should include instructions for returning home and reporting damage, as well as utility restoration guidance and other directives. Provide as much detail as possible, while keeping alerts brief. Remember, the more you share, the more lives you'll save.



SMS Examples

Governor [LAST NAME (OR OTHER PUBLIC OFFICIAL)] has declared that residents and businesses may return to [LOCATION] area. Documentation of residency will be required. [WEBSITE ADDRESS]

Residents and businesses are now allowed to return to their homes or workplaces with proper documentation. Unauthorized visitors must stay away from the area. Please cooperate with first responders. [WEBSITE ADDRESS]

For residents returning to the [LOCATION] area, please report damage or threats to structures, roadways and utilities. [REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS]. Please submit reports at [WEBSITE ADDRESS].

For residents returning to [LOCATION] area: [POWER COMPANY NAME] estimates power restoration on [DATE]. [WEBSITE ADDRESS]

[ROAD NAME] at [LOCATION] is blocked due to road damage. Detour is in place at [ROAD NAME] and [ROAD NAME]. Alert expires [DATE].



Email Examples

SUBJECT: Flood Affected Areas — Returning Residents / Businesses Only

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

Residents and businesses returning to the area affected by flooding will only be admitted with proper documentation.

For those outside the area, we understand the desire to see the storm's impact. However, admittance is not allowed at this time. Only residents and businesses with proper documentation may return.

Thank you for your cooperation.



Email Examples (continued)

SUBJECT: Report flood impacts — Returning Residents / Businesses Only

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

For residents and businesses returning to the area affected by floods, please report hazardous impacts, including blocked roads, downed power lines and threatened structures.

Report impacts by replying to this email or send a text to [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you for your cooperation.

SUBJECT: Power outages for residents and businesses of [JURISDICTION NAME]

FROM: [AGENCY NAME]

[POWER COMPANY NAME] is reporting power outages affecting our county from [STORM NAME].

Crews are out clearing debris and making repairs. Please use extreme caution on roads and bridges. Only residents may return to the area. Please cooperate with first responders as the storm recovery continues.

Visit [WEBSITE ADDRESS] for additional information.

Thank you,

