



Local Flood Guide

Bairnsdale

Understand, prepare, and respond effectively to your flood risk.

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Victorian State Emergency Service acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to their cultures and Elders past and present.

Disclaimer: Victoria State Emergency Service assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions for any of the content in this document.

Cover: Rail Trail Bridge, Bairnsdale. 2007.

Content reviewed: November 2025

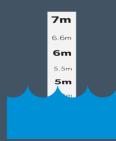


For more information visit: ses.vic.gov.au/plan-and-stay-safe

Local flood information



Bairnsdale has a history of flooding, with more significant flood events in 1990, 1998, 2007 and 2016.



The 1998 flood measured 7.75 metres at the Bairnsdale flood gauge causing over \$78 million in damages and sadly claimed one life.



Flooding can happen within hours, giving people little to no time to prepare and take action.

Why does Bairnsdale flood?

Bairnsdale is at risk of both **riverine flooding** and **flash flooding**, which can happen separately or at the same time. Both are usually caused by heavy rainfall.

Riverine flooding

This happens when the Mitchell River rises and overflows its banks, and spills water onto land.

- Bairnsdale is built around the Mitchell River, and parts of the town are on the floodplain, the naturally low-lying areas more likely to be impacted in a flood.
- Rainfall from as far away as the Great Dividing Range can end up flowing into the Mitchell River, potentially causing, or adding to flooding.
- When temperatures rise quickly, snow near Mount Hotham can melt, increasing the water level in the Mitchell River, potentially causing or adding to flooding.

Flash flooding

This type of flooding can happen quickly and you may not receive an official warning. Although these floods only last short time, they can cause severe damage.

- Stormwater drainage may not be able to drain the amount of rainfall, causing them to overflow.
- The ground may be unable to absorb the amount of rainfall naturally causing the water to pool. More buildings and less green spaces can impact this.
- The Mitchell River may quickly rise, causing water to rise and overflow its banks.

How do floods impact communities?

Even if your home or workplace stays dry, floods can impact you in many ways.



Buildings flooded



Road closures



Drinking water supply and quality affected



Power outages



Mobile and internet network outage

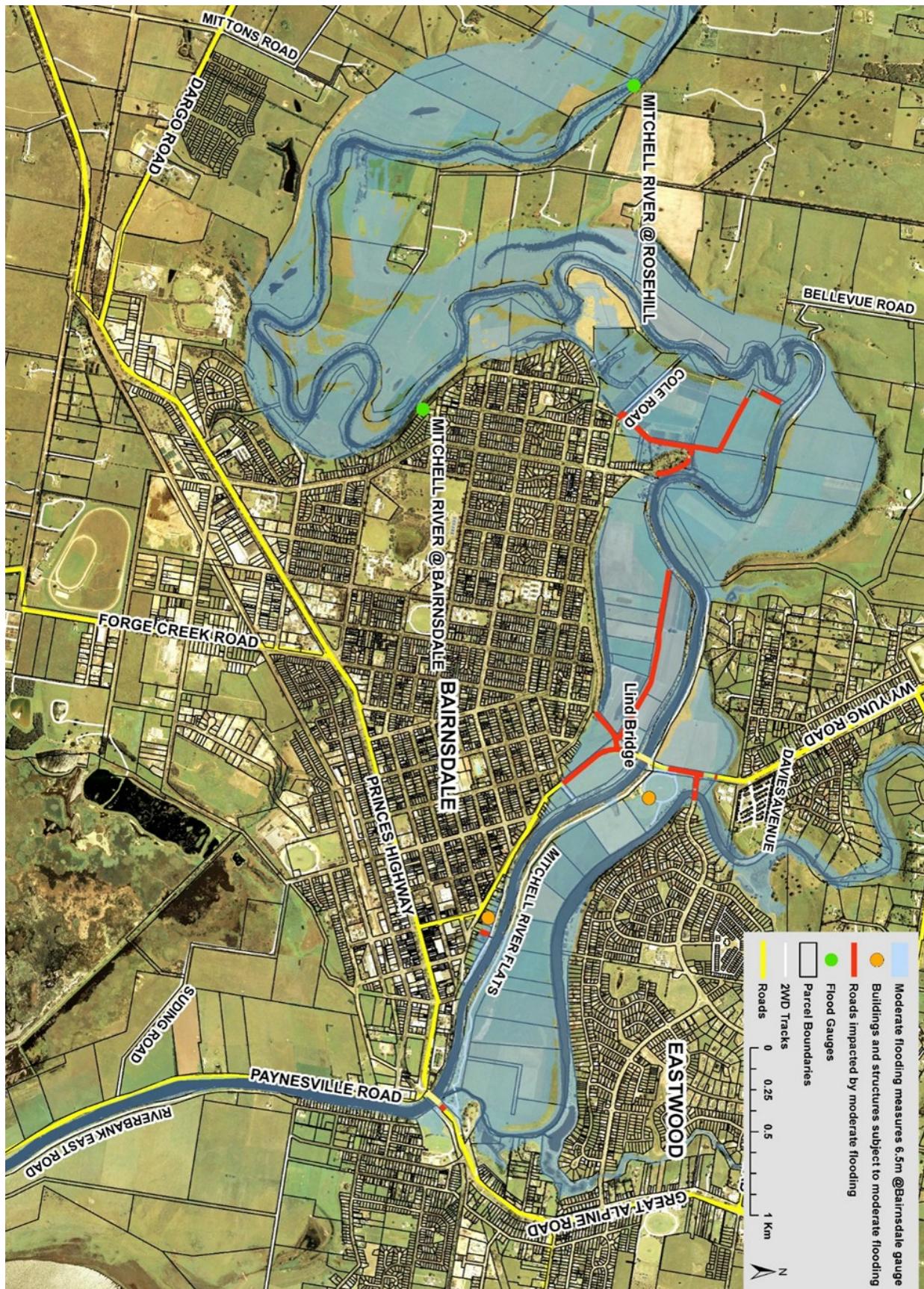


Sewage overflows inside building

Check your home, work, and travel routes for floodwater

If this map shows potential flood risk for you, ensure you take action to **plan and prepare for floods**. See [page 9](#) for more information.

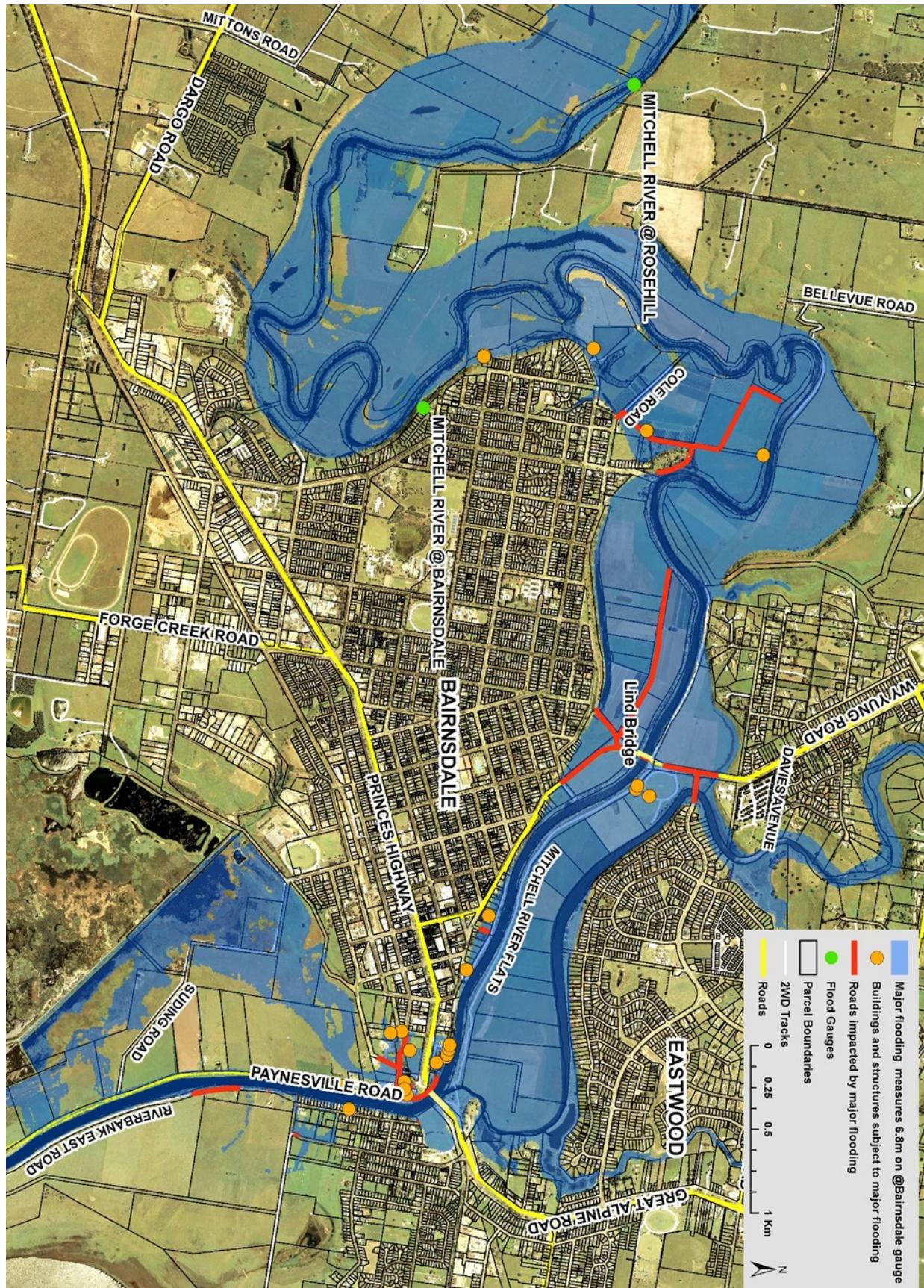
- This map shows the area likely to flood in a moderate flood event that would measure 6.5 metres high on the Mitchell River gauge at Bairnsdale.



Check your home, work, and travel routes for floodwater

If this map shows potential flood risk for you, ensure you take action to **plan and prepare for floods**. See [page 9](#) for more information.

- This map shows the area likely to flood in a major flood event that would measure 6.8 metres on the Mitchell River gauge at Bairnsdale.



What might happen in a flood in your area?

Although no two floods are the same and the environment is constantly changing, the below table provides an idea of what to expect at different flood heights.

- **Before a flood:** Use the floodwater heights in the table to help you decide when you will need to act to protect yourself and your property in a flood event.
- **During a flood:** When a warning is issued by [VicEmergency](#), use the predicted floodwater height and warning information to understand what the potential impacts may be for you and your community.

Floodwater Height (metres)*	Potential impacts
5.6	Minor flood level The Mitchell River and Clifton Creek rises and spills out of its channel into low lying areas of roads, properties, and walking tracks including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Howitt Avenue at Bullumwaal Road intersection• Eastwood Road near Roseleigh Place, Wy Yung• Yeates Drive, Pippin Road and Bredt Street at Picnic Point Reserve• Howitt Park boat ramp• Walking tracks at the Backwater, Lorimer Driver and Brookfield Estate.
6.48m	October 2023 flood event
6.5m	Moderate Flood Level The Mitchell River floodwater continues to expand further across the floodplain and low lying areas of roads, properties and parks including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullumwaal Road between Warde Street and Wy Yung, including Pound Swamp Hill Road, Howitt Avenue and Webbs Road is closed from flood water.• Bullumwaal Road Reserve and Mitchell River Flats track are affected by floodwater.• Cole Road at the intersection of Yeates Drive• Mitchell Port Road and the toilet block are affected by flood water.• Howitt Park is affected by floodwater rising on both sides of the Princes Highway.
6.8m	Major Flood Level The Mitchell River floodwater has expanded across most of the floodplain between Lindenow and Bairnsdale and the Macleod Morass affecting properties, main travel routes and access to some properties including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bairnsdale-Paynesville Road is closed between the Princes Highway including the Macleod Street intersection.• Macleod Street is closed between Park Street and Bairnsdale-Paynesville Road including Bridge Street, Suding Road, Macleod Court and the Davidson Oval and skatepark.• Riverbank Road East is flooded and closed approximately 300m from McEacharn• Most of the Bairnsdale Caravan Park is affected by floodwater, including flooding in the fixed buildings.• Properties including buildings, yards and carparks along both sides of the Mitchell River downstream from the Princes Highway bridge are impacted by floodwater. Some of the areas affected by flood water will have dangerous fast flowing water and depths up to 1.2 metres.
7.75m	June 1998 flood event

*The height measurement is at the [Mitchell River at Bairnsdale gauge](#).

^This table includes information from flood studies, which are scientific models used to predict impacts at different flood heights and flows.

What might happen in a larger flood event?

Although no two floods are the same and the environment is constantly changing, the below provides an idea of what to expect in the event of a flood reaching higher than the major flood level:



The existing flooding will become deeper, extend further and in some areas become dangerously fast flowing.

- Princes Highway on both sides of the Mitchell River bridge can be closed from flood water, potentially isolating communities East and North of Bairnsdale and disrupting major transport routes.
- Low lying points of Forge Creek Road near Macleod Creek may be impacted by flood water.
- Flinns Road between The Grange and Morton Drive may be closed by floodwaters.
- The intersection of McEacharn Street and Short Street may be closed from flood waters.
- Low lying properties on Robb Street, McEacharn Street and Crooke Street can be impacted by floodwater.
- Low-lying areas of Bosworth Road and area near Saleyard Road may be impacted by floodwater.
- Properties on Bairnsdale-Paynesville Road may be isolated.
- Impact to utility services (water, power, sewerage)

What roads are likely to flood?

During a flood, the roads listed above may flood and could be closed.

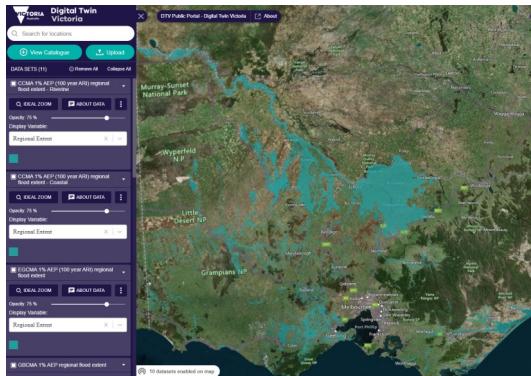
For current road closures, check [VicTraffic](#). [VicEmergency](#) may include road closures in its warnings, see [page 9](#) for more information.



Floodwater can be very deep, rise quickly and move fast.
Stay safe by avoiding flooded areas.

Bullumwaal Road and Pound Swap Hill intersection. 2007. *The Age*.

View the interactive flood map on Digital Twin Victoria (DTV)



The [Digital Twin Victoria Public Portal](#) brings together 2D, 3D and live data in a single online place for everyone to use. The portal hosts some flood mapping data.

- Use the map to zoom in on where you live, work and travel to see if it's likely to be affected in a flood event.

Go to digitaltwin.vic.gov.au



In a flood emergency, stay informed through [VicEmergency](#), see [page 9](#) for more information.

Your local services

Catchment Management Authority

For flood advice and information on flood levels or depths when developing your property.

- **East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority**
egcma.com.au | 03 5152 1184

Local Council

For relief and recovery support after a flood event.

- **East Gippsland Shire Council**
eastgippsland.vic.gov.au
03 5153 9500



Stay safe by never driving through floodwater. It can take just 15cm of flowing water to float a car, that's the height of an average pen.

East Gippsland Emergency Dashboard

East Gippsland Shire Council's Emergency Dashboard provides community with centralised real-time access to emergency information including weather, emergency warnings, road closures, river heights and power outages.

To support community preparedness the East Gippsland Emergency Dashboard provides access to:

- Local Flood Guides, via the Victoria State Emergency Service website, and
- Community Emergency Management Plans and Local Incident Management Plans on the 'Your Community' page.

Go to emergencydashboard.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au



Plan and prepare for floods

1 How to stay informed

VicEmergency is Victoria's source of emergency information and warnings.

- Set-up a watch zone for your area for alerts when warnings are issued.
- Learn about the three different warning levels.

VicEmergency app
emergency.vic.gov.au
1800 226 226

 vicemergency

 @vicemergency



2 Make an Emergency Plan

Use information from your Local Flood Guide and your Catchment Management Authority, to help you decide;



- What you will do in a flood emergency
- When you will do it
- Who you will inform



Red Cross RediPlan is a free tool that helps you create a simple emergency plan that supports the flood actions you have chosen.

- Visit redcross.org.au/prepare
- Download the [Get Prepared app](#)

3 Prepare an emergency kit



You may need to stay safe for 72 hours in a disaster before help arrives. Make sure you have safe drinking water, food, and any special needs or medications for all family.



There will be extra items to be added to your emergency kit in an emergency like clothes, a phone and charger.



Watch a video on how to get your Emergency kit ready.
youtu.be/XgyLnKDMkNo

4 Reduce impacts to your property

- Keep gutters and drains clear of debris including leaves and any other items.
- Check your building and contents insurance, what kind of flooding does it cover?
- Move your valuable possessions up high.
- Back up important files and documents to a cloud storage or USB kept elsewhere.
- Identify higher ground on or around your property, away from the danger area.
- Consider buying sand and sandbags ahead of time, refer to our Sandbag Guide for more information.

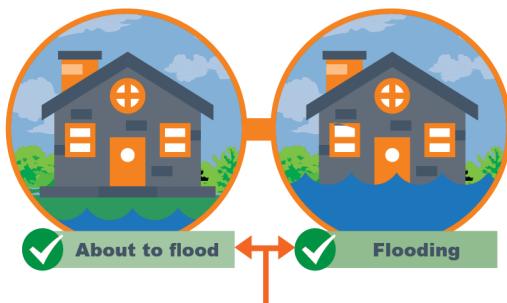


For more details and other tips, visit:
ses.vic.gov.au/flood



What to do in a flood emergency

When to call VICSES



 **Flood emergency assistance call
VICSES 132 500**

 **If life threatening call triple zero 000**

Stay Informed

VicEmergency

Emergency warnings will provide information on what is happening and advice of what you should do.

You may not receive an official warning before a flood.



VicEmergency app
emergency.vic.gov.au



vicemergency @vicemergency



1800 226 226

- Set-up a watch zone for alerts for your area.

Bureau of Meteorology



Monitor rainfall, river levels, weather forecasts/warnings.
bom.gov.au/vic/flood/east_gippsland.shtml

Emergency broadcasters



Radio | ABC 100.7FM or 828AM, REGFM 105.5, TRFM 99.9
TV | Sky News

If you expect floodwater at your property

1



Bag it

Sandbag doorways and low-lying windows to slow floodwater entering your home.

2



Block it

Block toilets, bath and drains using a sandbag ideally placed inside a plastic rubbish bag.

3



Lift it

Put your valuables and electrical items as high as possible. Turn off power, gas, and water at the mains.

4



Leave

- Leave **before** the flood arrives.
- Check warnings from VicEmergency for information like evacuation or relief centres, and road closures.
- Travel to the home of family or friends who are in a safe location, away from the flooded area.

Take your emergency kit and add the items below:



Phone & charger



3 day supply
Prescriptions & medication



3 day supply
Clothes for your family



Strong shoes



Pet needs

Never drive through floodwater

Large



A Large 4WD can be moved by water only 45cm deep.

Small



A small car can be moved by water only 15cm deep.



For more details and
other tips, visit:
ses.vic.gov.au/flood

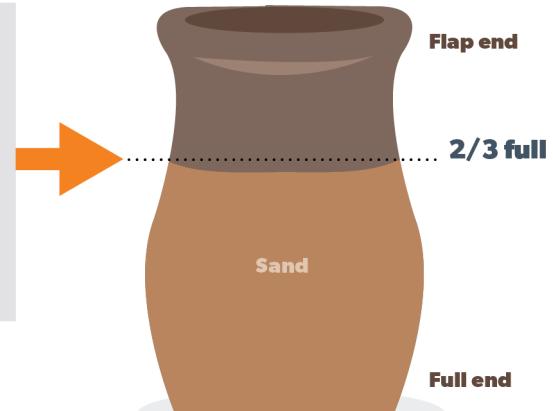


Sandbagging

Sandbags won't stop the water completely, but can reduce the amount of water entering your home.

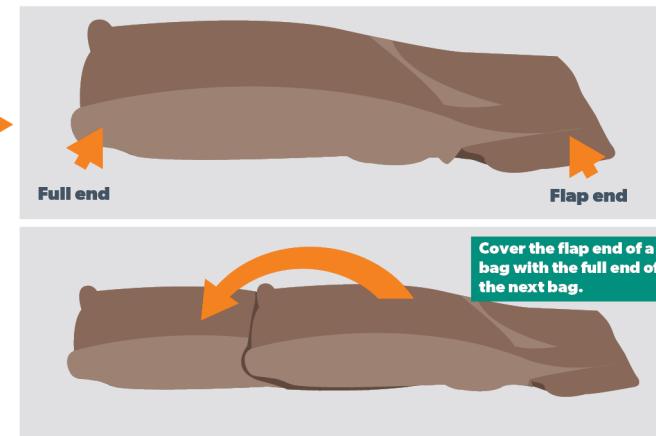
How do I fill a sandbag?

- Only use sand to fill hessian bags. Do not use dirt.
- Only fill sandbag two-thirds full.
- Do not over fill the sandbag as it will be too heavy to carry.
- Do not tie the top of the sandbag.
- Take care when filling and lifting the sandbag, to avoid injury.



How do I lay sandbags?

- Lay sandbags like brickwork. Stagger rows so that the joins do not line up.
- Start at one end and work to the other end.
- Ensure the unfilled part of the bag is covered by the next bag.
- Tuck flap under the bag at the end of the row.
- If the sandbag wall is going to be more than five (5) bags high, you will need to lay two (2) rows wide.



Where do I place the sandbags?

- Place sandbags in plastic bags to cover drainage holes in home (e.g. showers, toilets, sinks) to stop back flow of water.
- Place a small wall across doorways, at least the height of the expected water level. Be careful not to trap yourself inside.
- If available, plastic sheeting may be used under sandbags to reduce the seepage.



Block it

Toilets, bath and all drain holes



Plastic
Sheeting

What do I do once I have finished with the sandbags?

- Sturdy gloves should be worn when handling wet sandbags as they can contain chemicals, waste and diseases.
- Sandbags that have been in contact with floodwater need to be thrown away.
- Contact your local council to find out how to dispose of your sandbags safely.



Sandbags and sand

Preparing your home

Having sandbag supplies ready can assist you before a flooding emergency occurs.

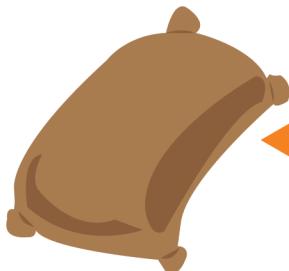


What supplies do I need to sandbag my home?

- Sandbags
- Sand
- Plastic sheeting
- Gloves and safety goggles
- Shovel and hand scoop

Where can I purchase these supplies?

- Many sandbag supplies can be purchased from hardware stores or garden centres.
- VICSES do not routinely supply sandbags to households.
- During floods, sandbag distribution points may be established in flood-affected areas.

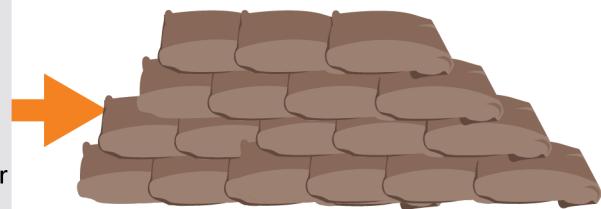


How many sandbags will I need and how much sand?

- Most homes can be protected by less than 25 sandbags.
- The number of sandbags will depend on your local flood risk and availability.
- Sandbags are filled 2/3 full which requires around 15-20kgs of sand per bag.

How do I store my sand and sandbags?

- Filled sandbags only have a short shelf life.
- It is recommended to store sandbags empty.
- Sandbags should be stored in a cool dry area away from UV light.
- Sand should be kept dry and can be stored in water resistant containers or under a tarp.
- Sand is heavy - ensure it is stored so it can be moved safely.



When should I sandbag my home?

- **You** are best placed to decide if there is a need to sandbag your home, based on local knowledge and past flood events.
- Monitor your local conditions. Stay up-to-date with weather forecasts and warnings by downloading the **BOM Weather** and **VicEmergency** apps, or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.
- If you think you are at risk, do not wait for an official warning to act.