

STORMS, FLOODS & MUDSLIDES

Los Angeles County contains some of the steepest and most erosive mountains in the world, the San Gabriels, with elevations reaching 10,000 feet above sea level. Below steeply walled canyons lie large coastal plains with a high population density. When heavy rains come, there is a significant potential for floods and mudslides.

Before the Flood

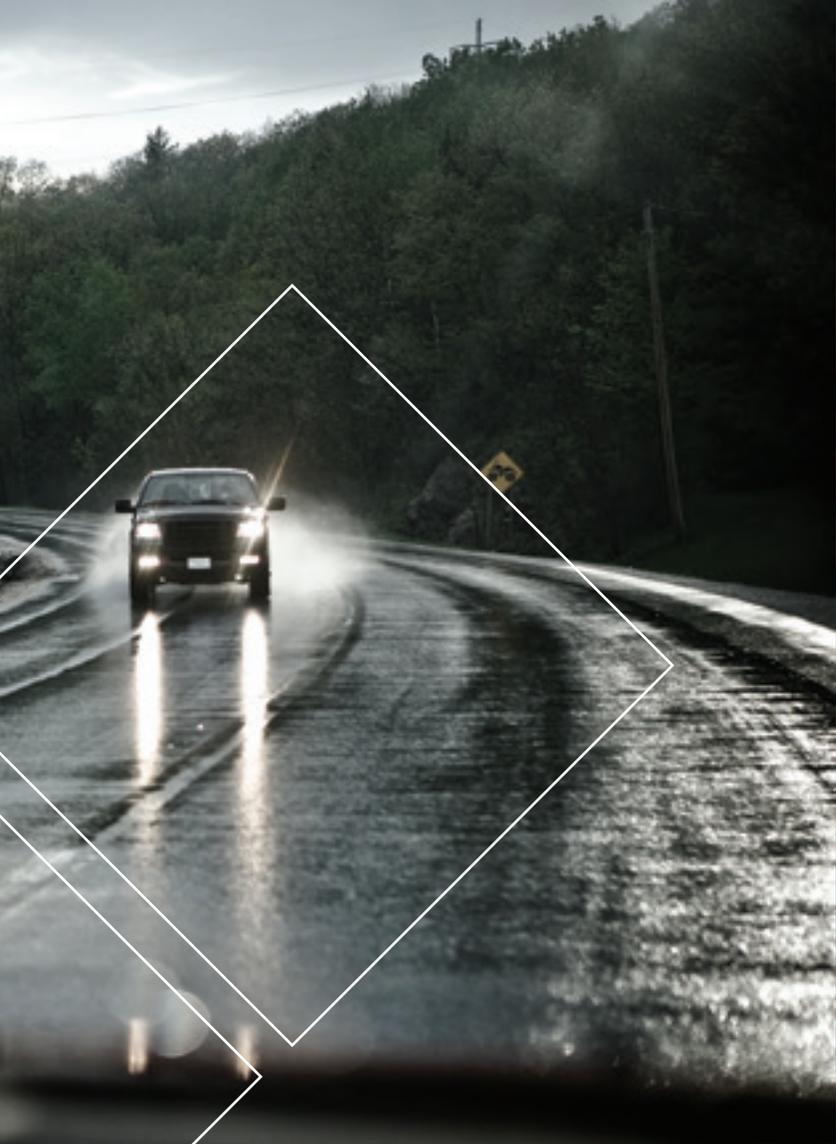
1. Assess the safety of your house and belongings in case of a flood or mudslide.
 - Are you near a creek?
 - Do you live above or below a steep hillside?
 - Do you have to drive over a creek or bridge to get to a main road?
2. Clean drains and gutters around the house in the fall before the winter rains come. Check drains on nearby streets. If blocked, notify the Department of Public Works at 1-800-675 HELP (4357).
3. If diversion of water or mud is necessary, plan to fill sandbags well before the rain starts; sandbags are available at your local fire stations. Take time now to find out what fire station serves your area and learn proper placement of sandbags.
4. If you live in a hilly area, maintain all slopes in a safe manner. Use appropriate plantings, slope coverage, and drainage channels. For information on drought and fire-resistant plants, the Fire Department has a guide to native plants on its website at www.fire.lacounty.gov/Forestry or contact the Fire Department at (213) 456-7891.



In 1914, when the population of the Los Angeles Basin was about 700,000, a four-day storm produced more than 19 inches of rain in the San Gabriel Mountains, resulting in floods causing \$10 million in damage.

Floods in 1938 caused \$70 million in damage in Southern California, and in 1969, floods caused \$400 million in damage and 60 deaths.





TIPS

Have a plan in place before an evacuation is ordered.

The safest plan is to stay with friends or family during all rainstorms in which a flash flood watch or warning has been declared for your area.

Teach your children to stay away from all rivers, creeks, arroyos, drainage control channels and washes. Teach all family members about the watch and warning system.

Determine in advance how you will stay informed about the latest flood and flash flood watches, warnings, and weather advisories. Stay Informed for information on the Emergency Alert System and other ways to get updated storm information.

Attend community meetings.

Talk to your neighbors about their plans, and encourage them to plan to get out early.

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During the Flood

- Do not cross rapidly flowing streams. Stay on one side until the water recedes. Most streams will go down in a couple of hours, once it stops raining.
- During a storm, check drainage systems at your home and driveways to maintain a safe situation and limit damage.
- Watch for mudslides and adjust drainage to reduce mudslides.
- If you notice a major mud slippage either above or below your house, move your family to a safe location, notify your neighbors and call the Department of Public Works at **1-800-675-HELP (4357)**.

WHEN IT'S RAINING...

Plan to arrive at your location in a safe neighborhood before it starts raining and remain there until well after the storm. Burned logs, boulders, mud and other debris can create temporary dams which burst days after the rain has stopped. This could be hours or sometimes even days after the rain has stopped. Be particularly alert when driving. Watch the road for collapsed pavement, mud, fallen rocks, and other hazards. Bridges may be washed out, and culverts overtopped. When you see water across a roadway, there is no way to see whether the road under the water has been washed away. The water may be much more deep and powerful than you expect.



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After the Flood

- Don't return to your flood-damaged home before the area is declared to be safe by law enforcement and health officials.
- Assess damage; check hillsides, houses, etc. for slope movement, settling, and water damage.
- Following a storm, drive slowly and carefully as many roads may have mud, debris, holes, and washed-out areas.
- Check with the Department of Public Works at **1-800-675 HELP (4357)** or at **www.ladpw.org** to find out what roads are damaged.
- Remember, many mudslides occur as the soil dries after an extended wet period, so a mudslide may take place several days after the rain stops.
- Winter is often the best time to plant slopes, so make plans and fix any problems areas before the rainy season begins.

Sandbags and other barriers can help divert small mudflows. Remember, however, that these small measures may be meaningless to a huge debris flow. The hillsides will gradually stabilize during the next three to seven years.

