

# BEST PRACTICES



## Winter Rains: Stay Safe & Help Prevent Flooding

### Winter is upon us and with it comes a lot of rain.

When it rains, water cannot soak in through all of the roads, parking lots and rooftops we've built in our communities. Instead, it flows over these hard surfaces. To help prevent flooding on roads and in our neighborhoods, the cities and the county built a system of storm drains, pipes, ditches and ponds to carry the water off the roads.

### Stormwater System Maintenance

It's important to regularly check and maintain storm drains and other parts of the stormwater system. Otherwise, they can become clogged and lead to flooding.

For some neighborhoods, it is the property owners' responsibility to inspect and maintain all or part of their neighborhoods' stormwater system. The cities and county all require inspection forms to be completed and returned by late summer. This ensures that neighborhood stormwater systems have been cleaned and repaired before the rainy season returns!

### You can help prevent flooding on the roadways.

1. Rake leaves and debris away from storm drains to prevent clogging.
  - Stay safe, wear a high visibility vest and have someone look out for cars for you.
  - You can use raked leaves as mulch around your trees and shrubs.
2. Inspect your neighborhood storm drains and have them cleaned when necessary.
  - Visit [thurstoncountywa.gov/sw/swdocuments/rs-mnt-diy-flyer-catch-basins.pdf](http://thurstoncountywa.gov/sw/swdocuments/rs-mnt-diy-flyer-catch-basins.pdf) to learn how to inspect and maintain storm drains.
3. Keep grass, leaves, dirt and debris from going into roadways and drainage ditches.
  - Sweep, blow or pressure wash debris away from the road so that it does not clog storm drains or drainage ditches. If you have a maintenance crew performing landscaping, ask them to do the same!



### What to do if the road is flooded.

**1. Contact your local jurisdiction if you think storm drains are clogged and you cannot safely unclog them.**

- **Lacey:** 360-491-5644
- **Olympia:** 360-753-8333
- **Thurston County:** 360-867-2300
- **Tumwater:** 360-754-4150

**2. Turn around, don't drown.**

- If the road is flooded, do not attempt to drive through it.
- According to the National Weather Service, six inches of water on the road can cause most passenger cars to stall or lose control.

### Know your flood hazard.

Some areas of Thurston County are prone to groundwater flooding or flooding when streams flow over their streambanks.

### Find out if you live in an area prone to flooding.

Thurston County uses FEMA's (Federal Emergency Management Agency) flood insurance rate maps. Visit [geodata.org](https://www.fema.gov/geodata) to look up flood risk for your parcel or contact the County's Floodplain Manager, Tim Rupert, at 360-867-2123.

### Check rainfall, stream and groundwater levels.

You can find current and historic levels for rainfall and the status of local streams and groundwater levels by visiting Thurston County's monitoring website at [monitoring.thurstonwater.org](https://monitoring.thurstonwater.org).

### Stay in the Know: Sign up for severe weather alerts.

The National Weather Service sends warnings for tsunamis, tornadoes, flash floods, extreme winds, blizzards, ice storms and more. You can receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) on your mobile device. The service is free and automatic, if your cell phone is WEA-capable. For more information on Wireless Emergency Alerts on your cell phone visit [co.thurston.us/em/alerts](https://co.thurston.us/em/alerts).

## Want to find out if your neighborhood is responsible for maintaining its stormwater system?

**Contact the stormwater inspector for the county or city in which you live.**

- **Lacey:** Carlos Aviles-Ortiz, [caviles@ci.lacey.wa.us](mailto:caviles@ci.lacey.wa.us), 360-486-8712
- **Olympia:** Kane Osstifin, [kosstifi@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:kosstifi@ci.olympia.wa.us), 360-753-8579
- **Thurston County:** Cathe Linn, [cathe.linn@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:cathe.linn@co.thurston.wa.us), 360-867-2095
- **Tumwater:** Matthew Joseph, [WaterResources@ci.tumwater.wa.us](mailto:WaterResources@ci.tumwater.wa.us), 360-754-4140

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