



South Coast Flooding

The risk of coastal inundation (flooding) is one of the most significant risks on the National Risk Assessment. The south coast (from the Hampshire border to the Kent border) is under threat from the possibility of tidal inundation caused by a combination of low atmospheric pressure over the English Channel, high tide levels (spring tides) and gales driving a storm surge down the English Channel.

The outcome would be a very large sea surge in the channel, with tides, gale force winds and potentially heavy rainfall. Many coastal regions and tidal reaches of rivers could be affected all along the South of England.

Excessive tidal levels would cause many coastal and estuary defences to be overtopped or breached, and drains would back up. Inundation from these breaches would be rapid and dynamic, with minimal warning and for some people, no time to evacuate.

HISTORY

There have been significant coastal flood events throughout history in Sussex. Most recently a storm surge in March 2008 caused widespread flooding around Selsey.

In October 1999 high tides and winds battered the south coast causing flooding at Pevensey and Selsey. A further storm in December 1999 led to the evacuation of properties in Pevensey although the forecast tide levels were not reached.

Coastal flooding affected several areas along the Sussex coast in February 1983. High tides caused flooding which affected over 150 properties in Littlehampton and Shoreham and properties were also flooded in Newhaven.

IN SUSSEX

Sussex's coastline is a major attraction for many UK holiday-makers, and is also a popular area for retirement. There are thousands of static caravans along the coast across a large number of caravan sites, as well as other homes and businesses that support the coastal tourist industry.

Of these static caravans, a number are occupied for the majority of the year. The coast is a popular place for retirement and residents are less likely to have local family support and therefore can be more reliant on social care.

Sussex also contributes to the UK's food supplies through farming and agriculture. The salt contamination of agricultural land would have a significant impact on UK food supplies and invariably the prices paid by consumers.

Much has been done to protect the Sussex coastline, particularly in the construction of flood defences. However, sea levels are rising, and because of the national and local impacts of a serious flood event, the risk is something which must be taken seriously.

The risk of coastal flooding is managed through flood defences schemes across the county. However, the consequence of flooding, if defences are breached, is high.

RISK IMPACTS

The predicted impacts could include:

- Risk to life (people and animals)
- Damage to property, businesses, agricultural land, roads, structures and infrastructure
- Pollution and contamination of local environments
- Long-term damage to tourism, businesses and agriculture
- Damage to national critical infrastructure

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

- Find out if your property is within the flood risk area by logging on to the Environment Agency website or calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188.
- Plan where you will go if you have to evacuate and how you will get there.
- Know what to do to protect your property during a flood and have adequate insurance.
- Identify neighbours who may need assistance or who may be able to provide assistance to you, in case of evacuation.
- Have supplies in your home that will enable you to cope for up to 3 days if you are unable to evacuate.
- Ensure you are signed up to Flood Warning Direct if you are in a flood risk area.
- Where possible, move valuable/irreplaceable items to upper floors during times of flood risk.

CONSEQUENCES

The consequences could include:

- Disruption to utilities (electricity and water supply)
- Flooding of properties
- Evacuation of residents
- Short, medium and long-term accommodation of those whose homes are flooded
- Unrecoverable damage to businesses
- Long-term psychological and health impacts
- Long-term restoration and recovery issues for homes and businesses

WHAT ARE WE DOING IN SUSSEX?

- Identification of flood risk areas and who and what is at risk.
- Production of multi-agency plans to assist with the evacuation of those communities who are at risk.
- Strategic planning to protect the areas at risk.
- Development of ways and means of alerting the public as early as possible when there is a significant flood risk.
- Continuing to invest in maintaining and improving our sea and tidal flood defences.
- Developing flood rescue and assistance for those who become isolated by flooding.



Inland Flooding

As the events of summer 2007 and the floods in Cumbria in 2009 showed, flooding can take different forms and, at its most serious, can affect many different aspects of our daily lives. Over the coming years, rising temperatures and sea levels, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events are likely to raise the risk of flooding in the UK.

Excluding coastal flooding, the other main types are river flooding, surface water flooding caused by excess rainfall and groundwater flooding caused by a high water table in permeable rocks such as chalk. These types can be grouped under the general description of 'inland' flooding as they can and do occur simultaneously.



HISTORY

In summer 2007 the UK was seriously affected by flooding. In Gloucestershire the flood affected thousands of homes, the water supply to 350,000 people was seriously disrupted and a major electricity substation came within inches of flooding which would have led to 250,000 people being without power.

Prolonged heavy rainfall in the autumn of 2000 caused extensive flooding across Sussex and over 800 properties were affected in Lewes. The winter of 1993 and 1994 also saw widespread flooding in Sussex. Chichester was particularly severely affected and over 200 properties were flooded in West Sussex.

IN SUSSEX

Many agencies are involved in responding to floods. Different agencies are best equipped to deal with a specific type of flood. For example, the Highways Authorities can manage flooding on a public highway, while the local water company would deal with a burst water main.

The Environment Agency maintains and operates flood defences and provides a 24-hour flood warning service for properties at risk from river and tidal flooding in England and Wales.

RISK IMPACTS

The predicted impacts could include:

- Risk to life (people and animals)
- Damage to property, businesses, agricultural land, roads, structures and infrastructure
- Pollution and contamination of local environments
- Long-term damage to tourism, businesses and agriculture.

CONSEQUENCES

The consequences could include:

- Disruption to utilities, electricity and water supplies
- Evacuation of residents
- Short, medium and long-term accommodation of those whose homes are flooded
- Long-term psychological and health impacts
- Long-term restoration and recovery issues for homes and businesses.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

- Find out if your property is within a flood risk area by logging on to the Environment Agency website or calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188..
- Plan where you will go if you have to evacuate and how you will get there.
- Know what to do to protect your property during a flood and have adequate insurance.
- Identify neighbours who may need assistance or who may be able to provide assistance to you, in case of evacuation.
- Have supplies in your home that will enable you to cope for up to 3 days should you be unable to evacuate.
- Ensure that you have signed up to Flood Warning Direct if you are in a flood risk area.
- Where possible, move valuable/ irreplaceable items to upper floors during times of flood risk.

WHAT ARE WE DOING IN SUSSEX?

- Identification of where the flood water could go and who and what is at risk.
- Production of multi-agency plans to assist with the evacuation of those communities who are at risk.
- Strategic area planning to protect the areas at risk.
- Provision of guidance for the public about protecting property from flooding.
- Development of ways and means of alerting the public as early as possible when there is a significant flood risk.
- Continuing to invest in maintaining and improving river defences in our high-risk areas.
- Developing flood rescue and assistance for those who become isolated by flooding

FLOODLINE WARNINGS DIRECT

Floodline Warnings Direct is a free service run by the Environment Agency that gives advance warning of flooding by telephone, mobile, fax or pager. To register for the service call Floodline on 0845 988 1188; it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To register, all you need is a telephone number where flood warnings can be sent 24 hours a day. Calls to the Floodline are charged at local call rates.

If you live in an area at risk from flooding from rivers or the sea, and are not currently registered for the Floodline Warnings Direct service, you may still receive an automatic warning from the Environment Agency when a flood occurs.

People can also find out what flood warnings are in force in their area any time of the day or night by:

- contacting Floodline 0845 988 1188 and listening to recorded flood warning messages or speaking to Environment Agency staff
- viewing Teletext (page 154) or Ceefax (page 419)
- viewing the flood warnings (updated every 15 minutes) on the Environment Agency website www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodline.

The Environment Agency is the main place for information on past floods, flood maps, and practical guides on protecting your home during a flood event. You can access these services and more at www.environment-agency.gov.uk