



FRESHET COMMON QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. What is a freshet?

A. A sudden rise in the level of a stream, or a flood, caused by heavy rains or the rapid melting of snow and ice between May and mid-July.

Q. Is there going to be a big flood this year?

A. Much depends on the weather, and snowpack both of which are difficult to predict.

Q. What is the chance of a major flood?

A. It is impossible to know in advance how high water levels will rise. The severity of flooding, and whether or not significant flooding occurs on major river systems, will depend primarily on the weather.

Q. When will the flood hit?

A. There is no way of knowing when water levels will peak. But river levels will not rise suddenly. We will have warning of high water flows several days in advance. We will continue to monitor water levels constantly and keep the public informed through the media.

Q. What does the City do to prepare for an annual freshet?

A. In recent years, the City has completed a number of diking system upgrades to prepare for Fraser River freshets. In addition to large capital projects, the City also completes numerous maintenance activities throughout the year to ensure the diking system is maintained.

Q. How much notice will a person have that their area is going to flood?

A. Weather patterns and forecasts will be the primary indicator of Fraser River water levels, and the City relies heavily on the Ministry of Environment River Forecast Center for regularly updated flood forecasts.

Q. In the event of a flood, how long would it be before the water recedes?

A. In general, the exact time frame and level of high water is entirely dependent on weather patterns. A rapid heating pattern would result in higher water levels over a shorter duration and a cooler pattern in lower water levels over a longer duration.

Q. What will happen to the sewer systems if there is a flood?

A. If there is high water that is outside of the setback dikes the sewer system will not be impacted. If flooding of the community in the South Bonson and Lower Hammond area was to occur, however, the City and the Metro Vancouver could be rendered incapable of conveying sewage and sewer backups could occur.

Q. What is a non-standard dike?

A. A non-standard dike, or agricultural dike, is one that does not meet Provincial design standards, where:

- to be constructed to the elevation of the flood of record (1894) plus two additional feet (0.6 meters) of freeboard.
- to be constructed with appropriate side slopes (i.e. 2:1 river-side slopes and 2.5:1 land-side slopes, depending on dike height) for stability during high water.
- to be maintained free of large trees and woody vegetation that could cause a breach in the dike during high water.

Q. What are municipalities and the Province doing to protect us from flooding?

A. Both local governments and the Province have been working hard to prepare for potential flooding by improving dikes, establishing response centres, updating their emergency plans and setting up systems for cooperation.

Q. My local government will not give me enough sandbags to protect my house, where do I get more?

A. The Province will supply sandbags to local governments once it is clear when and where we will have high water which requires sandbagging. If you are not willing to wait, individuals can purchase sandbags and sand commercially. Your local government may be able to provide the names of businesses that supply sand bags commercially. The Provincial Emergency Program gives information on how to lay and prepare sandbags.

Q. How will I know if I have to evacuate my home?

A. There is no immediate danger of severe flooding or evacuations. Listen to your local radio for regular updates on the flood risk. If evacuations are necessary, the public will be notified via social media, press releases and other methods as deemed necessary. If you live in an area that has flooding in the past, or are not sure, you should listen to your local radio station or social media regularly for flood updates.

Q. How many people will be evacuated? Will they get a warning and have time to evacuate?

A. If it appears we may have to evacuate homes, authorities will notify the public to prepare for evacuation and monitor their local radio for more information. If an actual evacuation order is issued, the public will be informed through the media and, if possible personal contact.

Q. Can I take my pet with me if I am evacuated?

A. Pets are not allowed in emergency reception centres. If you live in a low lying area, you should make arrangements with friends or family to care for your pet in case of evacuation. If all else fails, contact the local SPCA for more information.

Q. What happens to my livestock if my fields flood?

A. Owners are responsible for the safety of their livestock. If your fields have flooded in the past, you should move your livestock to higher ground well before flooding begins. At a minimum, you should arrange for a place to move them to and for transportation, so that you can move them quickly in necessary.

Q. Would the dikes in the Fraser Valley be breached intentionally?

A. No, this is not true.

Q. Why was construction of my home in the floodplain permitted?

A. Settlement patterns throughout BC were established along major transportation routes and on fertile agricultural lands on the Lower Fraser floodplain.

Since 1948 over \$200 M in today's dollars has been spent on constructing improving and maintaining some 250 km of dike and other protection works to protect communities throughout BC on the floodplain.

While much of Pitt Meadows residential population is concentrated in areas outside of the floodplain, residential development is permitted in the floodplain, as it is throughout BC, subject to construction regulations.

Generally, the underside of the lowest habitable floor must be constructed to flood construction level, which ranges from 5.33 to 1.88 m geodetic depending where in the floodplain you are. Recent changes in legislation now also required the registration of a flood protection covenant on title.

Q. My insurance agent says I am not covered against flood damage. Who will pay for the damage to my property?

A. There is a provincial Disaster Financial Assistance Program designed to help people cope with the cost of necessary repairs in the event of a natural disaster such as a flood.



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Emergency Preparedness Program



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