

## Community Advisory Board

(cont on pg 2)

## Climate Change

In colder regions, warmer winters lead to faster snowmelt in the spring, which can overflow rivers and cause widespread flooding. Climate change is also slowly raising sea levels due to melting glaciers, increasing the long-term risk of coastal flooding during high tides and storms. On Long Island intense rain events and coastal flooding from storm surges are our primary concern.

### Q: What is a flash flood?

**A:** A flash flood is a sudden, intense flood that typically occurs after heavy rainfall. Flash floods can be extremely dangerous, especially in cities and towns with extensive pavement, where water cannot soak into the ground. Flash floods often come with little warning and can wash away roads, cars, and buildings, making them one of the deadliest types of weather-related disasters. Long Island's primary risk is coastal flooding.



### Q: How can coastal and flash floods affect public health?

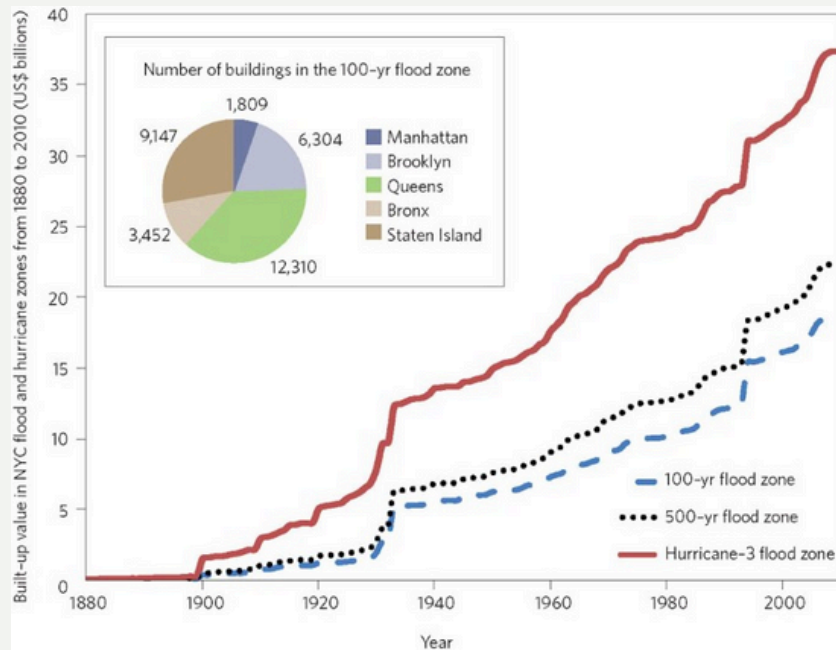


**A:** Floods can cause injuries or deaths due to drowning, accidents, or unsafe conditions during evacuation. In addition to this, floodwaters typically carry harmful bacteria, viruses, and chemicals, leading to waterborne diseases like cholera, hepatitis, and gastrointestinal infections. Standing water also creates breeding grounds for mosquitoes, increasing the risk of diseases such as West Nile virus and other vector-borne illnesses (Source 3). Vector-borne diseases are illnesses that are carried by mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks and passed on to humans. Furthermore, floods can potentially disrupt access to clean drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare services, worsening health outcomes. Long Island's coastal communities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of more frequent coastal flooding due to Long Island's low-lying coastal geography.

## Q: How can floods and climate change affect mental health?



**A:** Events such as floods can lead to trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many survivors deal with intense feelings of loss and fear, especially if they have lost their homes or had to relocate (Source 4). A lot of people, especially teens and young adults, also experience eco-anxiety, or a deep worry about the future of our planet. This can lead to feelings of helplessness and depression, especially with constant news about rising temperatures, melting ice caps, and disappearing wildlife. Some people also feel climate grief, which is the sadness and guilt that comes from seeing nature and ecosystems slowly being destroyed (Source 5).



*Rising property exposure to coastal flooding in New York City since 1880*  
Photo Source: Nature Climate Change, SpringerNature.com

## Q: How do floods harm wildlife?

**A:** Floods can destroy habitats, drown animals, and wash away nests or food sources. Many species are forced to relocate, and young or weak animals may not survive. Aquatic life can also suffer when floodwaters carry pollutants, debris, or too much sediment into rivers and lakes.

## Q: How does environmental justice play a role?

**A:** Environmental justice matters in places like Wyandanch, where flooding can have greater impacts due to older infrastructure and more limited resources. Wyandanch faces risks from heavy rain and poor drainage but recent investments in new sewers have reduced these risks (Source 6). Residents may lack access to funding, repairs, or emergency support. Additionally, floodwaters can spread disease-causing bacteria, sewage, and mold. With more limited access to healthcare or storm-resilient housing, low or moderate-income residents can face greater health risks and slower recovery (Source 7).



## The effects of flooding on mental health



### Q: How do floods affect children's mental disorders?

**A:** Floods can have serious effects on young people's mental health. As noted in the graphic above, children are at added risk for trauma. Studies show that adults often experience anxiety, depression, and PTSD after a flood, while children may show stress, aggression, or bedwetting (Source 8). Responses to floods include feeling scared, stressed, or helpless, especially if someone loses their home or loved ones. Financial stress can also affect mental health.

### Q: How can recovery be supported?

**A:** The best approach to support recovery is a multi-sector effort involving local communities, the government, and health agencies. Communities can provide social support and communication, while health agencies can offer mental health services and medical assistance. Governments are needed to implement cleanup and rebuilding efforts. Using clear definitions of distress and mental health makes it easier for professionals to plan and respond effectively, track who needs help, and learn from past disasters. The recovery should address short-term needs, such as counseling and emergency assistance, and long-term needs, like rebuilding homes and ongoing mental health care. National and international research indicates that this combined approach helps people recover faster and reduces the long-term effects of floods (Source 9).

## Q: Why is climate change the culprit?

**A:** Climate change worsens flooding by increasing the intensity and frequency of extreme weather. Warmer temperatures cause more evaporation, leading to heavier rainfall during storms. This raises the risk of both flash floods and river floods. Sea level rise, another effect of climate change, makes coastal areas more prone to flooding during high tides and storms. As floods become more common and severe, vulnerable communities, such as Wyandanch, face greater damage, health risks, and longer recovery times.

## Q: What can we do about this?

**A:** At the community level, investing in green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, permeable pavement, and better drainage systems, can help absorb stormwater and reduce flooding. In addition to this, creating more resilient housing in flood-prone areas can make a huge difference. Individually, people can help by reducing their carbon footprint (using less energy, driving less, and supporting clean energy), preparing emergency kits, and staying informed about local flood risks. Supporting policies and leaders that prioritize environmental justice and climate action is another key step toward long-term change. The next two graphics provide helpful tips from the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control.

**FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR FLOODING**

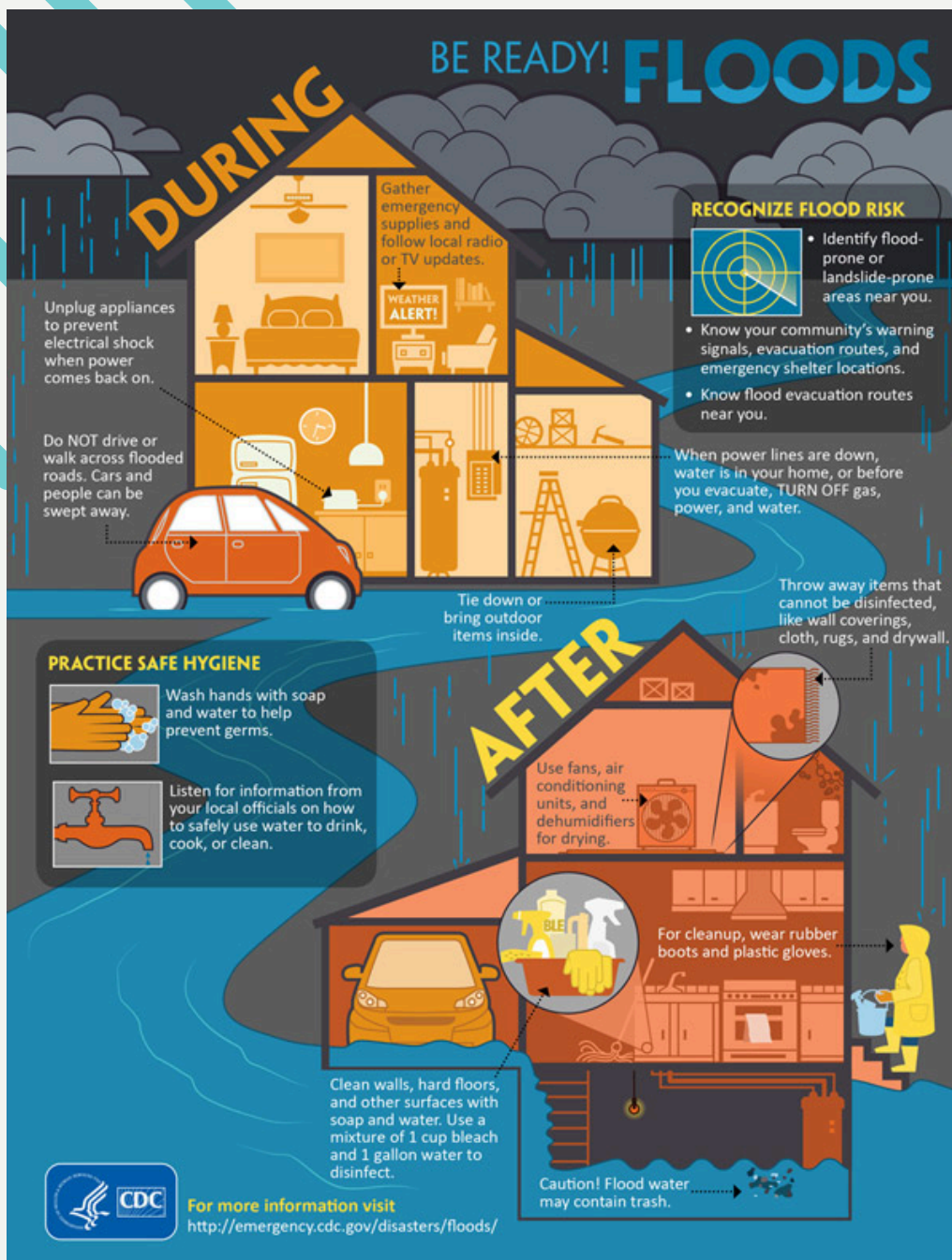
Flooding events can present a potential hazardous public health risk. Food in affected areas may become contaminated and consequently become unsafe for human consumption. To prevent foodborne disease, consumers should pay extra attention to the following issues.

- Keep hands, food preparation areas and utensils clean.**
- Separate raw and cooked food. Segregate produce affected by flood waters.**
- Cook thoroughly.**
- Keep food at safe temperatures.**
- Use safe water and safe raw materials.**

World Health Organization  
Western Pacific Region

[cdn.who.int/media/images](https://cdn.who.int/media/images)

[cdn.who.int/media/images](https://cdn.who.int/media/images)



www.cdc.gov/floods

## Sources

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