## Introduction

During autumn 2000 a large number of communities were affected by some of the worst flooding for nearly 40 years and forced to confront the devastating consequences that flooding can bring. Flooding is a natural process and whilst it can't be prevented there are things we can do to prepare for a flood event.

This booklet aims to provide guidance on how individuals and communities can be prepared by starting voluntary flood warden schemes and developing their own community flood plans.

Although, the Environment Agency issue warnings for most main rivers and the coast, it is important for individuals and local communities to understand that they also have a responsibility to look after themselves, their family and property to prepare for flooding.

There are a number of successful Flood Warden Schemes in the South West and many advantages can be gained from these schemes. They can help bring the community together during difficult times and by working together with the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and the Emergency Services the impact of flooding can be reduced.



## What is a Flood Warden Scheme?

Flood Warden Schemes are owned and run by members of the Parish Council or the Local Community and supported by the Environment Agency. They consist of nominated volunteers who receive direct flood warnings from the Agency and pass these on to their neighbours. The number of flood wardens will depend on the size of the community and may be operated by a single individual.



Each flood warden will have a certain area that he/she will look after and by working together with the Environment Agency ensure their community is prepared for flooding.

This could be in a variety of different ways for instance;

- Ensure members of the community have received direct flood warnings, they know what they mean and where they can obtain further information
- Work as a community to prepare for a flood event and identify vulnerable people from within the community who may need extra help
- Developing a community flood plan

For a scheme to operate effectively during a flood event it is beneficial for the community to develop a flood plan. This is a plan of action detailing the areas that each flood warden will cover, who may need extra help and assistance during a flood event and the roles and responsibilities of each operating organisation.

## The Flood Warning Service

The Environment Agency monitors the rainfall, river levels and the sea conditions 24 hours a day. This information combined with Met Office forecasts allow the Agency to determine when flooding is possible.

Flood Warnings can be issued via the media, the Internet or direct to properties at risk of flooding by telephone .

This consists of a pre-recorded message informing the property owner of the level of warning that has been issued and who to contact for further information. Where a flood warning service is offered the Agency will aim to provide a warning at least 2 hours before the onset of flooding. Although in some locations the rivers react so rapidly to rainfall that this is not possible

The Floodline service 0845 988 1188 provides people with information on what to do before, during and after a flood and also operates the quickdial service to provide up to date pre-recorded information about the river and rainfall conditions where a flood warning has been issued.

The Environment Agency uses four flood warning codes to indicate the level of danger and severity of the flooding. These are:



Flooding is possible. Be aware! Be prepared! **Watch out!**

Flooding of homes, businesses and main roads is expected. **Act now!**

Severe flooding is expected. Imminent danger to life and property. **Act now!**

An all clear will be issued when flood watches or warnings are no longer in force. Flood water levels receding. **Check all is safe to return. Seek advice.**

## How to start a Flood Warden Scheme

The first stage in starting a scheme is to find volunteers within your community to act as Flood Wardens. This may be through an advertisement in the village magazine or simply by word of mouth. Once you have your volunteers it might be worthwhile holding a meeting and inviting a member of the Environment Agency's Flood Warning Team to provide further information about the Flood Warning Service.

The Environment Agency can also provide support and advice in producing a community flood plan. This details the role of each flood warden during a flood event and the responsibilities of each operating authority.

**Always remember that your Health and Safety is very important. Flood Wardens should never place themselves in positions where their own personal safety is at risk. In particular they should not enter deep fast flowing water. They should always call the emergency services to deal with such situations.**

If you or a member of your community is interested in starting a scheme, further information and advice can be obtained from your local Environment Agency Office. They may be able to put you in touch with other communities that have a flood warden scheme in place who can provide help and advice with starting the scheme and developing a community flood plan.

## SOUTH WEST REGION ADDRESSES

**REGIONAL OFFICE**
Environment Agency
South West Region
Manley House
Kestrel Way
Exeter EX2 7LQ
Tel:    01392 444 000
Fax:    01392 444 238

**CORNWALL AREA OFFICE**
Environment Agency
Sir John Moore House
Victoria Square
Bodmin PL31 1EB
Tel:    01208 78301
Fax:    01208 78321

**NORTH WESSEX AREA OFFICE**
Environment Agency
Rivers House, East Quay
Bridgwater TA6 4YS
Tel:    01278 457 333
Fax:    01278 452 985

**SOUTH WESSEX AREA OFFICE**
Environment Agency
Rivers House
Sunrise Business Park
Higher Shaftesbury Road
Blandford DT11 8ST
Tel:    01258 456 080
Fax:    01258 455 998

**DEVON AREA OFFICE**
Environment Agency
Exminster House
Miller Way, Exminster
Devon EX6 8AS
Tel:    01392 444 000
Fax:    01392 316 016

— Area Administrative Boundaries
— Regional Boundary
● Area Office
▲ Regional Headquarters

NORTH WESSEX AREA

Bridgwater

Blandford

Exeter ▲
Exminster

DEVON AREA

SOUTH WESSEX AREA

Bodmin ●

CORNWALL AREA

**www.environment-agency.gov.uk**

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE
# 0845 933 3111

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
F L O O D L I N E
# 0845 988 1188

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
E M E R G E N C Y  H O T L I N E
# 0800 80 70 60

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

SW-01/04-C-BHLE

# Flood Warden Schemes

## A guide to help the community prepare for flooding



# Floodline
## 0845 988 1188
### ENVIRONMENT AGENCY