

Flash Flooding and Ham Radio

What do flash floods have to do with ham radio? We as ham operators can be extra eyes and ears for our local authorities. Most people don't know that Flash floods are the Number One weather-related killer in the United States. And that Nearly *half* of all flash flood fatalities are auto-related!

Most flash floods are caused by slow moving thunderstorms, thunderstorms that move repeatedly over the same area or heavy rains from tropical storms and hurricanes. These floods can develop within minutes or hours depending on the intensity and duration of the rain, the lay of the land, soil conditions and ground cover.

Flash floods can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings and bridges, and scour out new channels. Rapidly rising water can reach heights of 30 feet or more. Furthermore, flash flood-producing rains can also trigger catastrophic mud slides in some area's of the country.

I do not want to encourage you to drive around just to seek out flash flooding in severe weather, because that makes you more likely to become part of the problem, than it does to make you part of the solution. However, if you have to be out, or you just can't help yourself from driving around looking at the water rise, and you do find water flowing over a road that does not have a barrier up, you could possibly save someone's life by reporting it, and by all means it is just one more way that ham radio operators can save lives.

You might ask:

How can a foot or two of water cost some one their life?

- Water weighs 62.4 lbs. per cubic foot and typically flows downstream at 6 to 12 miles an hour.
- When a vehicle stalls in the water, the water's momentum is transferred to the car. For each foot the water rises, 500 lbs. of lateral force are applied to the car.
- But the biggest factor is buoyancy. For each foot the water rises up the side of the car, the car displaces 1,500 lbs. of water.
- In effect, the car weighs 1,500 lbs. less for each foot the water rises.
- Two feet of water will in fact carry away most automobiles.

If you find a road way covered by water, you can report this by cell phone if you have service, or by relay over local repeater to someone who does have phone service. They in turn can contact proper authorities which in our case would be our local office number for emergency dispatch. Use the quickest means available to get the information to the correct authorities.

After they are called they can assess where barriers need to be placed and if the road needs to be closed.

If you need to check on road closings for someone with the concern of which way to travel because they don't know if the road is open or if you plan to travel and think you might have to journey through adverse weather conditions we have the following resources. You can check road conditions within the Arkansas State Highway System online at:

www.arkansashighways.com On the first page that comes up click on "Roads" then on the next page click on "road closings"

You may also call **501-569-2374** any time day or night to receive the latest information on weather-related road conditions. A recorded message with highway conditions is updated frequently during adverse weather.