

The Local Flood Hazard

Colleton County is a coastal county and the fifth largest (land size) county in the State. Over 40% of the county is in a **Special Flood Hazard Area** (SFHA). Unfortunately, living along the coast has risks by way of flooding that are hazardous to property and life. The following major flood producing storms have affected Colleton County in the past 100 years: An unnamed storm in 1893 produced a tide of 17.0 to 19.5 feet above Mean Sea Level (MSL), The Hurricane of 1940 had a tide surge of 14.2 feet MSL, Hurricane Hazel in 1954 caused minimal damage, Hurricane Gracie in 1959 had a tide surge of 11.9 feet MSL, and Hurricane Hugo in 1989 caused minimal damage.

Colleton County is subject to flooding from the Atlantic Ocean hurricanes, other severe storms and the Edisto River.

The chances of hurricanes and tropical storms are most prevalent from June 1 through November 30. August and September are the most active months for tropical storm activity. An approaching hurricane poses a potential danger or rising sea levels with wind driven waves and strong currents.

These facts along with the large range between high and low tides makes the southern coast particularly vulnerable to destructive flooding. With the rise and fall of the rivers, water levels are gravity-maintained via water control structures, or trunks. Occasionally heavy rains

Flood Warning System

Cable **Channel 9** and radio station **WALI 93.7 FM** will broadcast emergency messages.

Should an evacuation be advised, local officials will notify you through radio, cable TV, and the Colleton County Operations Center, which will disseminate

an evacuation notice door to door with bulletins denoting **“What To Do, When To Do It, and Where To Go.”** Evacuees will be directed to shelters by law enforcement at traffic control intersections. The local contact phone number is (843) 549-5632. Please call in reference to evacuation notices, procedures and shelters.

Flood Safety

If a hurricane warning is issued, citizens could be asked to evacuate. Before leaving, windows and doors should be locked and taped or boarded up. Turn off the electricity at the main breaker terminal and gas system at outside source - **only if you know how**. Be alert for gas leaks. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Do not smoke or use candles, lanterns, or open flames unless you know that the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated. Small appliances should be unplugged. Towels or rugs should be put around openings to reduce seepage. Lightweight or easily damaged items should be moved to the highest location possible, secured and covered with plastic. Be sure to secure outdoor furniture and potted plants.

Dangerous chemicals, insecticides, herbicides or gasoline should be put in water tight containers and in a high spot. If you cannot take pets with you, put out food and water. Watch for animals, including snakes. Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours.

Drive carefully using designated evacuation routes.

Have an emergency kit packed with the following items: portable radio, flashlight, batteries, blankets, extra clothing, baby products, non-perishable food, manual can opener, medicines, toilet articles, important papers and valuables. Keep children away from flood waters, ditches, culverts and drains.

Watch out for dangling electrical wires and flooded low spots. Report downed power lines to the power company.

Substantial Improvements

Any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or other improvement of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure before the start of construction of the improvement, over a five (5) year period, must conform to current building and flood regulations which might involve elevating the entire structure above the **Base Flood Elevation** (BFE).

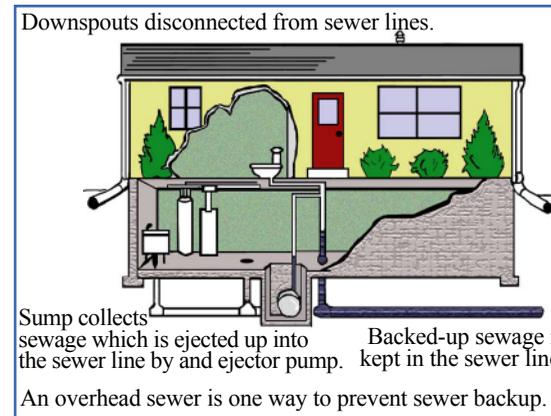
Property Protection Measures

Various alternatives are available to help minimize flooding. If the floor level of your property is lower than the **Base Flood Elevation** (BFE), consider elevating your structure, if possible. Brochures discussing flood proofing and other mitigation measures are available at the Colleton County Public Library.

The Colleton County Planning and Development Department can provide you with a list of licensed contractors and consultants who are knowledgeable about flood proofing or retrofitting techniques and construction.

If a flood is imminent, some last minute emergency measures can always help. Property can be protected by sandbagging areas where water might enter living spaces. Valuables and furniture may be moved to higher areas of the dwelling to minimize damages. Attaching plywood or other approved protection systems over the windows and patio doors will help protect against high wind damages associated with hurricanes. Whatever emergency protection measures you use, it is always best to have a plan written in advance to make sure you don't forget anything after you hear the flood warning.

To increase the safety of your property and reduce insurance premiums, you should consider building to higher standards. Of course, the most effective and permanent means of protecting your structure is to locate it out of the floodplain. If you are unable to relocate your structure, the next most effective means is to elevate your structure above the base flood elevation.



Flood Insurance

The **National Flood Insurance Program** (NFIP) was created by Congress in 1968 to provide homeowners flood insurance at a reasonable cost. Since homeowners policies **do not** cover flooding, separate policies are available on almost any enclosed building and its contents including single family homes, condominiums, mobile homes on foundations and commercial buildings. Policies are written for one year. You do not have to live in the floodplain to qualify for flood insurance.

Flood insurance is required by law for federally financed loans when buying, building or improving structures, but you must act in advance. There is a thirty day waiting period on new policies. Check with your local insurance agent for specific rates and coverage.

Federal flood insurance is available in a **Coastal Barrier Resource System** (CBRS) area if the subject building was constructed (or permitted and under construction) before the CBRS area's effective date. Some coastal subdivisions on Edisto Island in Colleton County have CBRS areas identified.

The county's participation in the CBRS program includes the availability of **Certified Floodplain Managers** (CFM) in the Colleton County Planning and Development Department to answer questions about flooding, building requirements that are more stringent than federal minimum standards, regulations for stormwater management in new construction, publications in the Colleton County Memorial Library, and public outreach projects, such as this brochure.

Homeowners policies **do not** cover flooding.

Contact the **Colleton County Planning and Development Department** for more information.
Phone (843) 549-1709

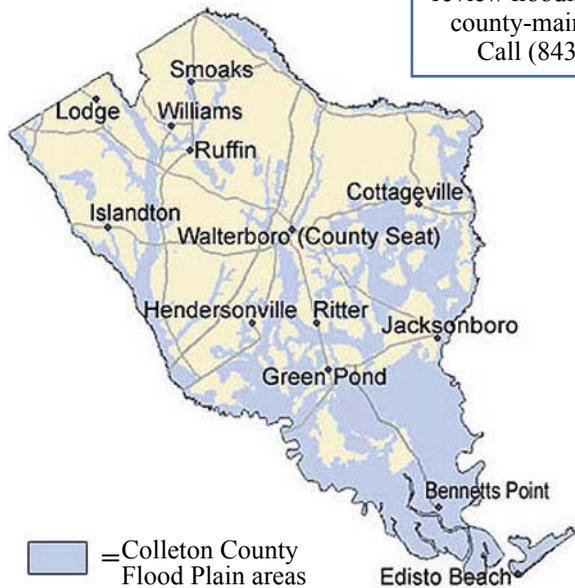
Floodplain Development Permit Requirements

All developments in the incorporated areas of Colleton County need local or state permits. Contact the Planning and Development Department for advice before you build, fill, place manufactured home, or otherwise develop. The zoning ordinance, flood ordinance, and the International Building Codes have special provisions regulating construction and other development within floodplains. Without those provisions, flood insurance through the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)** would not be available to property owners in Colleton County.

Do not dump or throw anything into ditches or basins. Make sure drainage ditches are clear of debris and are functioning properly

Any development in the floodplain **without a permit is illegal**: such activity should be reported to the Director of Planning and Development at (843) 549-1709.

Site visits can be made by the Public Works department to review flooding problems on county-maintained roads. Call (843) 539-1964



Natural and Beneficial Functions

Colleton County is a beautiful place to live. The undisturbed marshes and wetlands provide a wide range of benefits to the human and natural systems. They provide flood storage and conveyance, reduce flood velocities, and flood peaks. Water quality is improved through the marshes and wetlands ability to filter nutrients and impurities from runoff and process organic wastes. The local marshes and wetlands provide breeding and feeding grounds for fish and wildlife, create and enhance waterfowl habitat and protect habitats for rare and endangered species.

Colleton County is the home of the ACE Basin.

Colleton County is a place where waters, fresh and salt, conspire with the land to create a swampy Eden. Colleton County is the home of the **ACE Basin** where the Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto Rivers flow within seven miles of each other just before spilling into the sea at Saint Helena Sound.

The Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto Rivers, though flowing through similar habitats, are distinctively different. The Edisto courses over 300 miles from its headwaters near Aiken, and is the nation's longest blackwater river. It drains vast stretches of woodland and swamp, carrying the greatest volume of water of the three rivers. After periods of heavy rain, floodwaters overflow the banks and inundate the woodlands with a blanket of water spreading for miles.

The floodplains are an important asset. They provide open space, aesthetic pleasure, and areas for active and passive uses.



The ACE Basin

Did you know you are in or near a floodplain?!

Colleton County Planning and Development
P.O. Box 98
Walterboro, SC 29488



Citizen's Guide



Colleton County South Carolina