

# news release

29 November 2010

## Environment Agency to launch new flood codes

Those at risk of flooding in the Midlands will tomorrow (30 November) see an improved and extended flood warning service, provided free of charge by the Environment Agency.

During the summer floods of 2007 the Midlands experienced some of the most devastating floods in recent history. 10,460 properties and businesses were flooded throughout the region between June and July. The flooding of Mythe water treatment works in Tewkesbury created one of the UK's worst post-World War II emergencies, leading to the loss of piped water supply to 350,000 customers in over 138,000 properties in the Gloucester area for two weeks.

In response, Sir Michael Pitt stated that a number of systems needed to be improved to stimulate a more effective response from both professional partners and the public. This included changes to the flood warning system and improving the way in which the Environment Agency provides its online forecasting.

Warnings issued to homes and businesses by phone and text message will now include more localised information about potential flood risk from rivers and the sea, with clearer advice on actions to take to help safeguard lives and property. The existing 'flood watch' – the lowest level of warning – is replaced by 'flood alert', and icons have been redesigned to make them clearer and easier to understand. 'Flood warning' means that flooding of homes and businesses is expected, urging people to take action to prepare. A 'severe flood warning' will be issued when flooding poses significant risk to life.

The Environment Agency will also now provide a daily, three-day flood forecast for England and Wales on its website of flood risk from rivers, the sea and the potential for surface water flooding from intense rainfall.

Earlier this year, the Midlands Environment Agency automatically signed up some 50,000 additional homes and businesses to receive free localised river and sea flood warnings, more than doubling the total registered to over 100,000 properties.

Mark Sitton-Kent, Midlands Regional Director, said: "The launch of the new flood codes is just one aspect of the wider improvements being made to the Environment Agency's flood warning service. The new flood warning messages will include more localised information, with clearer advice on the action people need to take.

“We would urge every resident and business in the Midlands to check whether their property is at risk of flooding by visiting the Environment Agency’s website, or calling the Environment Agency’s Floodline on 0845 988 1188, and taking steps to prepare”

More information on the new flood warning codes can be found online at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodmidlands](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodmidlands).

**ENDS**

**Media enquiries: contact Emily Poyser on 0121 711 5855/ 5829 (these numbers can also be used during an emergency to contact a duty press officer)**

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

### **Notes for editors**

The new flood warning symbols and what they mean are:

#### **Flood alert**



#### **What it means**

Flooding is possible. Be prepared.

#### **When it's used**

Two hours to two days in advance of flooding.

#### **What to do**

Be prepared to act on your flood plan.

Prepare a flood kit of essential items.

Monitor local water levels and the flood forecast on our website

#### **Flood warning**



#### **What it means**

Flooding is expected. Immediate action required.

#### **When it's used**

Half an hour to one day in advance of flooding.

**What to do**

Move family, pets and valuables to a safe place.  
Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.  
Put flood protection equipment in place.

**Severe flood warning****What it means**

Severe flooding. Danger to life.

**When it's used**

When flooding poses a significant threat to life.

**What to do**

Stay in a safe place with a means of escape.  
Be ready should you need to evacuate from your home.  
Co-operate with the emergency services.  
Call 999 if you are in immediate danger.

**Warnings no longer in force (no symbol)****What it means**

No further flooding is currently expected in your area.

**When it's used**

When river or sea conditions begin to return to normal.

**What to do**

Be careful. Flood water may still be around for several days.  
If you've been flooded, ring your insurance company as soon as possible.

- In March 2011, Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government, Cabinet Office and Environment Agency will conduct a national emergency flooding exercise – Exercise Watermark – to test the country's arrangements to respond to severe, wide-area flooding from the sea, rivers, surface water and reservoirs. Local communities and businesses are being encouraged to take part by signing up at [www.exercisewatermark.co.uk](http://www.exercisewatermark.co.uk).