

FLOOD RISK: LEVEE FAQ

WHAT IS A LEVEE?

A levee is a man-made structure with an earthen or concrete embankment. Levees contain, control or move the flow of water during a flood. Communities have used levees for thousands of years to help reduce flood risk.

If a levee managed floodwaters in the past, why am I still at risk?

Levees reduce flood risk, but they do not remove the risk. Each levee – and flood event – are different. Levees may hold water during one storm event but not the next one. As storms grow more dangerous, levees that held floodwaters in the past may not be able to prevent flooding in the future. Over time, a levee’s structural integrity can also deteriorate.

Why haven’t I ever seen a flood in my neighborhood?

If your neighborhood has a levee, it has experienced major flooding at some point. That is why the levee was built. You may not have seen flooding as the levee has held floodwaters in past events. But it is impossible to know how high or fast floodwaters will return during future events.

RESOURCES

Living with Levees
[fema.gov/flood-maps/living-levees](https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/living-levees)

National Flood Insurance Program
[floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov)

Learn more about flood risk in Utah
[floodhazards.utah.gov](https://www.floodhazards.utah.gov)



What happens if a levee cannot hold back floodwaters?

With enough flow, floodwaters may run over the top of the levee and reach nearby structures. This is called overtopping. In heavier storms, floodwaters can erode levees, creating an opening for floodwater to flow through. This is called a breach.

Why don't our levees protect us?

The system of levees that make up the Provo River levee network was constructed over many years, starting in the 1800s. In coordination with Provo City, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funded and rebuilt portions of the Provo River Levee system in the 1980s as an emergency flood control measure during active flood events. The levees were not designed and built to provide permanent flood protection. With time, vegetation overgrowth and erosion have also taken their toll.

Can we strengthen the levee to better protect nearby neighborhoods?

Yes. Provo City is working to address known deficiencies so portions of the levee can be certified.

Once has been certified, FEMA can accredit the levee. This would show the levee reducing risk from the 1%-annual-chance flood event. It would not protect the City from all potential flood events. But it would decrease risk so that property owners behind the levee would no longer be required to purchase flood insurance in order to get a federally-backed mortgage.



WHAT CAN PROPERTY OWNERS DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM FLOOD DAMAGE?

Understanding your flood risk is the first step to manage and reduce it.

- **Know your risk!** Visit the Utah Division of Emergency Management website at [floodhazards.utah.gov](https://www.floodhazards.utah.gov). Scroll down to find the contact information for your local Floodplain Administrator.
- **Look at floodproofing options for your home.** This includes moving appliances or switching from carpet to tile on the first floor.
- **Buy flood insurance.** If an event does occur, you will be financially prepared. Visit [floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov) to get started.

Contact your local Floodplain Administrator for more ideas and questions.



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