

Flood Defences

There are a variety of measures you can take to help prevent floodwater entering your home and reduce its impact if it does. Although some of these measures are expensive, many of them will pay for themselves after a single flood

If floodwater is more than one metre high, you may cause more harm by keeping the water out as the force of the water may cause structural damage to your home.

To prevent water entering a property...

- Maintain your property and ensure the mortar between bricks is in good condition.
- Before making changes, seek advice from a specialist flood surveyor through the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.
- Flood defences may give you more time to move your possessions to safety. Often water is 'cleaner' when flood protection products are used as much of the mud and silt stays outside.
- Consider the impact of any outdoor works on your neighbours, e.g. concrete landscaping will increase levels of water runoff elsewhere.
- Look for Environment Agency kite-marked products, which have been tested and found fit for the job,
- For more information on self-help flood products, check the National Flood Forum's 'Blue Pages' Directory.
- Grants towards the cost of flood protection measures may be available from your district council.

To reduce the cost and repair time after any future flood, you could...

- Fit plug sockets, boilers and service meters higher on the walls.
- Choose water-resistant frames for doors and windows (and use silicone sealant).
- Get a chemical damp-proof course below joist level and install airbricks with removable covers.
- Install non-return valves in drainage pipes to prevent sewage backing up into the house.
- Check access points for pipes (e.g. washing machines) and fill any gaps.
- Use waterproof sealant on external walls and waterproof paint on internal walls.

And if there's a choice you can...

- Choose solid flooring (concrete covered with sealed tiles). This is more resistant than floor boards or chipboard.
- Have solid wood or plastic kitchen and bathroom units rather than MDF or chipboard.
- Pick lime or cement render which is more resistant than normal plaster.
- Replace built-in ovens and units with models that can be raised or removed.
- Choose rugs rather than fitted carpets.

Check with your insurer to see if any work carried out will lead to lower premiums

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Flood Defence Products

Here are some examples of flood defence products that may be available from your local DIY store. Please note that GCC is not able to endorse any particular products.



One airbrick will allow up to 50,000 litres of floodwater to enter your property every hour. Temporary airbrick covers such as this one can be placed over the airbrick to seal the gaps when a flood is anticipated. Reusable, metal airbrick covers, which take a little longer to install, are also available.

Flood boards are secured flat against the wall or frame surrounding a door or window. The pressure of the floodwater itself helps to seal the barrier. They are a useful alternative to sandbags which are not waterproof and are better suited to diverting shallow water and the coarse filtering of dirty water.



Pumps can help to move floodwater away from your property – for instance any residual water that has seeped through the barriers protecting your property. Some have a float switch which automatically activates the pump when it comes into contact with water.

Flood alarms can provide advance warning that your property is in danger of flooding. Sensors can be placed indoors or outdoors so that the alarm will sound when water reaches the area you have chosen (e.g. the bottom of your garden)



A common occurrence during flooding is back flow through sewage and drainage systems which have been overloaded by floodwater. Even if you have protected your house and managed to prevent floodwater from entering, raw sewage may still flow out of toilets. Toilet covers are available which create an airtight seal in the toilet bowl.