Floods can happen anywhere, anytime

Springtime is primetime for flooding. Torrential rain, snowmelt and mudslides can all cause flood losses and unless you have flood insurance, you probably are not covered for these potential catastrophes. Generally, coverage provided by a standard homeowners policy does not include damage caused by flooding or mudslides. This type of damage could be extremely destructive to your property and without the proper insurance coverage, you could be devastated financially. Floods can happen anywhere, anytime—not just near the coast, lakes and rivers.

You can help yourself prepare for flooding by heeding storm warnings and follow any evacuation procedures such as boarding up windows, shutting of utilities and preparing an emergency kit that contains food and water, a portable can opener, clothing, blankets, flashlights, first-aid supplies, battery-operated radio and extra batteries.

Also, maintain a current household inventory of your property and possessions and keep it in a safe place such as a safe-deposit box. An inventory is useful should you need to file an insurance claim. (See related article in this publication on how to create a home inventory.)

Then call our agency. The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Flood Insurance Program offers flood insurance to people throughout the U.S. Typically, an NFIP policy includes coverage for: removing contents; sand bagging (to reduce damage); repairing flood damage and rebuilding; clearing away debris and mud; and compensating for personal belongings.

What about flooding caused by seepage of water into a basement? First of all, check with us to make sure your definition of a basement matches FEMA’s definition. An NFIP policy covers the “unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters ...” So, if there is no surface water, there is no coverage. Water that “seeps or leaks on or through the covered property” is only covered “if there is a flood in the area and the flood is the proximate cause of the ... seepage of water.” There is no coverage for damage in basements when caused by groundwater seepage, but there is coverage for specific items that service the home (e.g., furnaces, fuel tanks, sump pumps, electrical circuit breakers and staircases). In addition, if contents are covered on the policy, there will be basement coverage for portable air conditioning units, clothe washers/dryers and food freezers.

Of course, no preventative measures offer complete protection. The best defense always will be the right insurance coverage. And, while many people think homeowners insurance will pay for flood repairs, it does not. Flood insurance typically has a 30-day waiting period before coverage goes into effect. Therefore, if you are concerned that your home may be at risk for flood damage, give our office a call today, before it’s too late! Unfortunately, too many homeowners find out too late that their insurance policy does not cover flooding. As your professional, insurance agent, we want to remind you that the time to purchase flood insurance is sooner rather than later.