



Community Development Department

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Our Flood Hazard

Flooding and drainage problems from heavy storms can happen anywhere in Chehalis. The major floods are caused by the overflow of the Chehalis and Newaukum Rivers and Coal, Salzer, and Dillenbaugh Creeks.

Flooding is most common from October through April, when storms from the Pacific Ocean, bring intense rainfall to the area. It can be aggravated during the winter with frozen ground and snowmelt, but rain is the major cause.

On the larger rivers, like the Chehalis, the water rises slowly enough to provide early [warning](#). (*Play it Safe During a Flood*). Heavy local rains can cause flash-type flooding in local ditches and in the creeks, with little warning time.

The “**base flood**” is the flood used by the National Flood Insurance Program and the City’s floodplain development regulations. It is the flood that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year. Note that the flood of December 2007 was roughly one foot higher than the base flood.

The base flood is shown as the Special Flood Hazard Area on FEMA’s Flood Insurance Rate Maps. There are three ways you can **find out if you are in a Special Flood Hazard Area**:

1. Call the City of Chehalis’ Community Development Department at 360/345-2229. We can provide additional information, such as:
 - a. The elevation of the base flood at your site
 - b. Whether your area was flooded by the record 2007 flood, and
 - c. The flood protection rules for building on, grading, or filling a property in the Special Flood Hazard Area
2. Get the map for your neighborhood from FEMA’s [Map Service Center](#).
3. Visit the National Weather Service’s website for information on the gages at the [Chehalis River at Centralia](#) and the [Newaukum River at Chehalis](#). On the Centralia gage site, click on “Inundation Mapping” in menu at the top to see a map of the area inundated by different water levels. You can move the map up to see our area in Chehalis. Click on “FEMA National Flood Hazard layers” to see the Special Flood Hazard Area.
4. **How bad has it gotten?** At the river gage in Centralia, the Chehalis River has gone higher than flood stage 18 times in the last 20 years. “Major flood stage” was reached in 1990, 1996, 2007, and 2009. The 2007 flood was roughly one foot higher than the base flood elevation at West Main Street.

At the Newaukum River gage, to the South, flood stage has been exceeded 27 times in the last 20 years, with “major flooding” occurring in 1996 and 2009.

Will my house get damaged? The odds of a house in the SFHA getting flooded is five times the chance that a house will have a fire. If your house is in or near the SFHA, it will get flooded someday.

There are ways to protect your house from flood damage. See more at [Protect Your Property](#).

Some buildings have been constructed above the base flood elevation, the elevation of the SFHA. We have FEMA Elevation Certificates on some buildings that were constructed or improved within the last ten years. Contact the Community Development Department for a copy. Drop by our office at 350 North Market Boulevard or call us at (360)345-2229.