Protect your property from flooding
Expert advice from The Flood Company

Falling victim to flooding can be an extremely devastating experience. In a matter of hours, all of your possessions can be destroyed, unable to be replaced. Whilst no flood defence system can stop water from getting into a property, they can buy you the time you need to make sure that you and your most valued possessions are out of harm’s way.

In this unique guide, Tony and Luke Ruddiman, founders of The Flood Company, show you how you can prevent the worst of any flooding and how to react if you should find your property flooded.

Inside they cover many topics, including:
- Making sure that you find the best flood defences
- How you can prevent as much damage as possible
- What to do if your property is flooded
- Top tips for dealing with any flood damage

And much more!

Tony and Luke have spent many years working in flood damage repairs, helping hundreds of property owners to both protect and rebuild when flood has occurred. Combining their expertise and experience, this simple and easy to follow guide can show you how you can look after your property, simply by investing in some flood defences.

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Protect your property from flooding

Expert advice from The Flood Company

Tony and Luke Ruddiman
Introduction

No one wants to find themselves living through the devastation of a flooded property. Whether it is your home or your business, the stress and damage caused can be truly demoralising. With flooding in the UK on the rise, it has never been more important to protect your property with a sufficient flood defence.

Whether you experience flooding regularly or you are living on a flood plain, it is important to make sure that you are prepared for any occasion. With knowledge and the right tools, you can see that your property is well protected. Unfortunately, no flood defence will ever keep such a powerful element as water from getting into your home over a sustained period of time. Yet, if you take a few simple steps and make sure that you are prepared, it can help lessen the impact that flooding can have.

With this guide, we want to show you how our flood defences can help you to minimise damage to your property, give you practical advice on how to cope during flooding and how you can rebuild your property quickly. By reading this guide, you will see just how much you can save yourself from the shock of flooding.

Tony and Luke Ruddiman
The Flood Company

Executive Summary:

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Knowing your flooding – and what you need

If you are looking to buy flood defences, it is likely that your property has been affected by flooding before or is located in a flood area. If you have ever experienced the devastation of becoming a victim of flood waters, you will know that the process of rebuilding your home can be a lengthy and expensive ordeal. This is why so many people come to us, looking for ways to protect their homes or businesses from falling victim again. However, there is no one solution for all properties. Before you select your new flood defence system, you need to know about what sort of flooding it is you face.

Location

The most important thing to look at when buying a flood defence is where the flood happened. Whenever we meet a client for the first time, we always asks what happened, where it happened and how did it happen. One of the biggest mistakes that people make is to assume that they know where the flooding comes from. For example, if you live near a canal, many people instantly blame the canal. The reality is that canals very rarely overflow – they are well regulated for their height levels. What has actually happened is that a river three miles down the road has overflowed and forced water into the canal.

Water can come from:

- Rivers
- The sea
- Ground water
- Surface water
- Sewers
- The mains supply
- Neighbour’s party wall
- Adjoining buildings or cellars
- Through your ground floor, if in an area of high pressure or no DPM (Damp Proof Membrane) is fitted.

And many other various sources. Knowing where the water has come from and why it has entered your property is the biggest thing that you need to know before you can accurately defend yourself from floodwaters.
Depth

After you have found out how the water got in previously, the next consideration is the depth of the flood water. The height the water rises to can drastically alter the type of flood defence you need, so it is important to know how high the water is likely to reach.

A couple of inches of flood water will not cause you that many problems, but if the water reaches over a metre high, there is the possibility of structural damage to your property. In this case, it is recommended that you let the water in to the building. There is one tonne of water pressure per cubic metre of water and this can place an enormous amount of pressure on a building. If you don’t let this water in through the front door, it will find its own way in, through the weakest point in the building’s structure, potentially demolishing it.

Knowing the depth of the flood water means that you will know which defences can best limit the damage that can occur through flooding. As it is extremely rare for flooding in the UK to exceed half a metre, any defences designed to hold back water levels higher than that are far more expensive than ones that will hold back the average height of flood water. This is due to the extra variables that have to be considered. For these defences, the material used must be of a higher grade structurally, and more of it is used to ensure that it can withstand the increased pressure. Above a metre, there are also more places where the water can come into your property. Vents for boilers and sewage pipes often act as inlets for floods of this depth, with far more areas being vulnerable as well. Knowing the height that flood waters typically reach in your area can mean that you buy the correct defence for you, possibly saving you money whilst you save your property.

Duration

There is no such thing as a typical flood. In our experience, no two floods are the same and this means that it can be difficult to predict their behaviour – particularly how quickly the waters will rise and how long they will last.

With flooding, it tends to be very specific to the area so you need to be prepared for when it arrives. If you experience flash flooding, you need to invest in defences that can either be erected quickly or can be held in place permanently, ensuring that you and your property are best protected. If you have more time to put defences in place, those at risk of flooding can be warned up to 48 hours in advance. Sometimes this can also inform which defences are most appropriate for your location.

As well as the speed with which flood waters arrive, you also need to consider how long they stay. If your home spends 24 hours in standing water, the flood will more than likely...
get into your home, no matter how thorough your flood defences are. Yet, with a system of
flood defences that can help divert or protect your home from the waters, you can help to
limit the amount of damage caused. This can be valuable to those who experience standing
water, as a plan of action really can make all the difference.

First defence
If you know that your property is at risk from flooding, it is important to be proactive in your
defence. By arming yourself with knowledge of what to expect from a flood in your area,
you can make sure that you make the best choice possible to protect your home or business.
There are a variety of different defence methods that you can use, acting as permanent or
temporary defences, depending on what you need.

Barriers
The most popular form of flood defence is with barriers. They provide a simple solution
that people can use in their homes or at their business premises. There are different types of
barriers which can be used in a variety of ways depending on how you need to use them.

For a more robust defence, or if you simply have flood waters that sacks will not be able to
help you with, there are also a number of removable barriers that can be deployed during
flooding. All of our flood barriers are bespoke made, designed to fit your doors exactly.
Every door is different, so all of our barriers are cut to the size and shape of each individual
doors, making sure that they are best protected from any flood waters.

These barriers are easily installed and removed, making it simple for people to fit them
should a flood be approaching. We have introduced a DIY kit for the installation of flood
barriers, making them a lot more affordable. With this you have a video that will take you
through every stage of the installation process. If you are practical and want to have a go
yourself, these DIY kits are perfect, whilst still ensuring that you are well defended.

One of the simplest methods is to use Flood Sax. These are sacks which inflate when they
come into contact with moisture. They are light and easy to store, unlike sandbags, but they
are still capable of effectively combating floodwaters, with each sack having the capability
to absorb up to 20 litres of water. We recommend that you use five Flood Sax in total, three
on the outside and two on the inside, as we have found that this provides a substantial layer
of protection during small periods of flooding. Additionally, they are extremely useful when
clearing up should flooding occur. They are fantastic for absorbing the moisture out of the floor. This means that after a few hours, you are left with dry debris that you can sweep out rather than a horrible heavy sludge. As they are capable of absorbing most liquids, you could find that cleaning up your home should a flood occur, is far easier.

**Flood Walls**

Whilst flood barriers offer a great deal of protection when waters are rising around your property walls, if you want to create a solid defence, the best way to minimise the risk of flood waters is to create a space between the flood and your property. Working to either divert waters or to block them from entering the perimeter, one of the most popular solutions we offer is a flood wall. As with the flood barriers, these are fully demountable, allowing you to put them up and take them down as and when you need to be prepared. These are perfect for locations where a flood barrier would be insufficient for protecting the building.

The best way to ensure the maximum effectiveness of your flood wall is to surround your property completely. This way it creates a no man’s land between your property and the flood water. The further away your flood barrier is from the building, the less chance you have of ingressive water coming through to the foundations and footings. This sort of defence is most frequently used in commercial properties, which have a larger amount of space to create a sufficient gap between the property and the barrier.

Creating a flood wall of this type can be expensive, but for a commercial property holding a large amount of stock or records, this can be considerably cheaper than being out of business for two months or losing £100,000 worth of stock. On the entrance of a small business or industrial estate, they can make all the difference.

**Flood Doors**

For some people, flood barriers or walls will not be a suitable option. Flood barriers require you to be at home when the flooding happens so that you can install them and flood walls require a great deal of space to be erected in. This is not always a practical solution. If you are in need of a more permanent form of protection, flood doors may provide the solution.

Flood doors use a unique locking mechanism on the top of the door, which goes all the way down the locking side of the door, along the bottom and then up the hinge side of the door. Instead of just locking into the frame, these doors latch onto the front of the frame, hooking around and creating a compression seal. These multiple points of contact create a tight compression seal around the door. This ensures that they are sturdier than a normal door.
The sophisticated and robust nature of these mechanisms allows there to be up to 600ml of water and the door will remain watertight. This strength of locking means that they provide a great deal of security as well.

Flood doors can come in two different materials: UPVC or Wood. Both are extremely effective at keeping flood water at bay but they do have their differences. As the UPVC doors are made of plastic, they bend more easily when subjected to the pressure of floodwaters. As a result, these doors are built with 8-10 points of contact around the door frame, ensuring that the compression seal remains watertight. The rigidity of wood means that these flood doors use a slightly different mechanism. They do not require as many points of contact, locking on the hinge and lock side whilst still ensuring full compression.

One of the main reasons for selecting a wooden door is to ensure that it fits with the aesthetic of the property. Often, listed buildings are in need of flood defences, but UPVC doors are not appropriate for maintaining the look of the building. Wooden flood doors can be manufactured to look like an existing door or to fit an appropriate aesthetic, allowing listed buildings to be adequately defended without compromising the character of the structure. However, this flexibility does come at a cost.

A flood defence may seem expensive, but compared to the potential cost of repairs on your property should it be flooded, it is minimal. Once you have gone through the highly involved process of stripping the damage away, repairing any structural damage and replacing any goods or possessions that have been destroyed, the figure you will have to pay is in the region of £20,000. If you know that you are in a particularly flood prone area, a flood door really is one of the best options, an investment in the security of your property. If you want total peace of mind, then a flood door is the best choice for many properties.

**Air Brick Defence**

Whilst people may prepare themselves from flooding with barriers, walls and doors, areas of vulnerability in the outer walls of the building are often overlooked when selecting a flood defence. One of the most common weaknesses in the outer walls of a property is an air brick. Designed to allow air flow into your home, it allows air to reach the floating floor– a timber frame at the bottom of a property that helps to support it. The timber and floor boards require air flow so rotting does not occur. The bricks themselves can be easily spotted, taking on the appearance of a normal brick, but with holes or perforations allowing air in. With these holes in place though, it does mean that flood water can get into the property and 99% of the time they are overlooked.
Floodwaters can be easily combatted with one of our airbrick solutions. An automatic airbrick or smart airbrick is designed to close off the moment that water touches it or rises to it. This is detected with a floating device inside the airbrick. Alternatively, you can purchase an airbrick cover. This screws in over the airbrick to ensure that it seals the airbrick from any water getting in.

Many people are unaware of the potential damage that can be caused by failing to recognise the vulnerability your building has through your airbricks – a number of people don’t even know that they have them. If you are unsure, take a walk around your property to see if there are any and whether they have defences. Failure to protect these correctly could lead to water coming into contact with the floor joists. If this happens, they will have to be replaced. Even when they are dried, air can still cause them to warp once they have touched water. If the joists have been completely underwater, it will more than likely result in the entire floating floor being replaced, an extremely costly exercise. For the sake of the cost of a smart airbrick, you can save yourself time, hassle and money by protecting one of the most vulnerable parts of your property.

**Non-return Valves**

Just as air bricks provide a point of vulnerability on the exterior of a building, water can find its way into your property from the inside as well. Water does not only come through doors and walls when flooding occurs. Depending on the nature of the flood, it can also enter your property through pipes and inlets that service the building. If a great deal of pressure builds up on the mains drainage system, you can get a fountain of water and raw sewage coming up. With the help of a non-return valve, you can ensure that this does not happen to you.

Non-return valves are fitted into pipes which may cause there to be breach in the event of flooding within the area. They are a small flap which allows water to flow freely from the property as it would under normal circumstances. However, if you get a build-up of pressure coming from the sewers, the flap will be forced closed, with the increased pressure. Similarly, another design, shaped like a duck’s bill, can also be used in the same way ensuring that the rubber seal is firmly closed when faced with excessive pressure coming from the other direction. These valves are extremely effective in preventing sewerage from entering the building from the wrong direction and are favoured by many homes and businesses.
However, the installation of these valves can be highly disruptive, as depending on where your pipes are located. It may require a great deal of groundwork and even digging up a main sewer to install it. As a result, we will only install these after a thorough on-site inspection.

**Passive Defence**

One method that is used to combat the effects of flooding is to simply let it happen. This passive approach is often extremely impractical however, and most property owners, domestic or commercial, simply cannot allow their lives to be dictated by floodwaters.

In order to take a passive approach to flooding, it requires every floor and wall to be sealed with a special resin that waterproofs and covers every possible crevice. Additionally, any possessions or items that could be damaged have to be held above a metre high so that they will not be damaged by the water. Once the water does come in, the site will need to be jet washed and sterilised. All flood water is contaminated so it is essential to make sure that every surface is properly sanitised.

With domestic properties, this approach is simply not practical or feasible, as many homes contain plasterboard, which will have to be removed after a flood regardless of any protective sealants with which it is coated. This is also the case with most commercial properties. They cannot realistically be closed for the duration that any clean up would require.

**Further Measures**

Whilst the passive approach may not be suitable for most property owners, some of the principles it uses are brilliant to follow as an extra defence for your building. Brickwork is extremely porous and that means that no matter how much you try to defend your home from flooding, water will eventually get in if exposed for a sustained period of time. To help slow down the effects of this, you can use sprays that work like resins to apply to the brickwork. Available in most hardware stores, these are absorbed into the bricks and mortar, helping to reduce the rate at which water can get in through your brickwork. This may not solve the problem of flooding, but it can buy you more time to complete all of the tasks that you need to before the situation worsens.

If you are building, it is also a good idea to include water repellent in your mortar, allowing you to combat the potential for flooding from the very start.
What if you’re in a flood?

Even if you have made sure that you are well defended from the threats of flood water, no systems of barriers will be able to hold water out indefinitely. Should you find yourself in a flooding situation, and without defences, it is important to know exactly what to do. This is why we have put together a brief list of guidelines so that you know how you can take action immediately and limit the impact that a flood will have on your life.

Look after your friends, family and colleagues

The most important thing in any situation such as flooding is to ensure everyone’s wellbeing. If you don’t have time to secure your home and possessions fully, just make sure that everyone on site is safe and able to seek shelter away from danger. Make sure that you have an alternative location that you can reach with any children, elderly people or pets that are on site. Additionally, as flood waters can be extremely unpredictable, you need to make sure that any provisions such as medicines or special foods are on hand. You never know whether you will be able to return to your property in a few hours or whether you will have to wait a few days.

Before you make any rash decisions regarding evacuation, the first thing that you should do is monitor the approach of the flood waters. Try to make sure that you are prepared for them as they reach your front door. If there is no immediate danger, you can begin to use your time preparing your property for the damage ahead.

Move your belongings

If you have time, and it is safe to do so, make sure that you move all of your personal belongings, putting them in a position that is safe from the impending danger. If you have any electrical goods or expensive furniture, be sure to move them above floor height, preferably upstairs. If you do not have an upstairs area, then try to raise items off the carpet so that they remain dry. You can use anything to prop up your belongings, just make sure they are off the floor.

If you have a longer period of time in which to prepare your home, you can even move your washing machine or take up your carpets. With flooding it is all about minimising the impact of any damage, using your time to move things out of harm’s way is the best way to ensure that you are in the best position you can be.
Place down Flood Sax or similar products

Whilst many people think that laying initial defences is the first thing you should do after ensuring everyone’s safety, it is important to deal with the interior of your property first. It is difficult to know how much time you have, meaning securing your belongings can happen too late. Once you have gathered the essential items that you will need, the next thing you should do is place sandbags or Flood Sax at your front and back doors, creating a first line of defence for your home.

If you cannot adequately defend your home with these, it may be better to divert the water. By setting up the bags or sacks in a specific fashion, you can make sure that the worst of the water moves beyond your property. Creating a solid wall is not always the best solution for protecting your building.

Sealing the gaps

If you are without any other form of defence, such as sandbags or Flood Sax, there are still ways that you can protect your property. Seal all of the gaps around doors and windows by using duct tape. Whilst it may not hold all of the water at bay, it can lessen the impact of the flooding. It will enable you to filter any water that does enter your home, hopefully minimising the contamination that could occur with the flooding. With some form of filtering in place, you can limit the damage that can occur.

Gather your important documents

As well as protecting your home from damage, it is also essential to ensure that you are prepared for the clear up that will occur after the flood waters recede. One of the things that people forget to collect when leaving their home in a flood is all of their important documents. If you are in a flood, you will need to have your insurance details so that you can begin work on rebuilding your property and making sure that your claim is progressing as quickly as possible. Similarly, you may want to pick up your passports. You may be leaving the country soon and may not be able to access your home until it has been fully repaired. It is also worth making sure that you have at least one official form of identification, just in case you require it whilst your property is out of action.

Prepare for the worst

If you find yourself in a flood, always assume that it will be the worst case scenario. This may seem like unusual advice, but if you prepare yourself for the worst eventuality, you will be able to cope with whatever happens in the aftermath of flooding. As you won’t be
able to return to your property for an extended period of time, make sure that you have the contact numbers that you will need, plan your escape route and get in touch with your local authorities to see if they have arranged emergency shelter for those made homeless by the flooding. Find out the best contact number to ring – everyone will be ringing 999 so try to find out different numbers you can contact in case of an emergency.

If you want to make sure that you are prepared, take a look at our checklist. You can find it at the back of this guide as a handy place to keep all of the essential information you need should you be caught in a flood.

How to deal with the aftermath of flooding

The most important thing that you can do if you have been flooded is to stay calm. There is a process that needs to be followed and it does take time. All you can do is prepare yourself for the time ahead. It can be demoralising and depressing to see the state of your property, and you can feel like nobody is doing anything to help, but the process simply takes time. With these simple steps, you can continue to act, even when you’re not in your home.

Wait for the loss adjuster

Whilst your first instinct may be to begin taking apart your property in order to bring some normality, it is best to wait. Your insurance company will need to see the true state of the building in order to accurately reflect the value of your damaged possessions. If you have disposed of them already, you may find that you do not receive a fair amount for your goods. The undervaluing of goods is a common side effect for those claiming on flood damages. By throwing the items away before a loss adjuster has come, you make it easier for an insurance company to not give the true amount you are owed.

It can be an extremely frustrating process waiting for the loss adjuster to arrive but it is essential to make sure that you do.

Chase your insurer

As well as making sure that the loss adjuster sees the true nature of the damage, make sure that you have checked the true nature of your insurance coverage. More and more, there are a number of insurers who will not cover certain items and if you are caught in a flood
you may not receive the help that you need. A number of insurers will not have contents covered as well as the building. Be sure to check this.

Chase your insurer. In these circumstances, there will be a large number of homes affected and it is important to make sure that you are persistent and getting the service you need. By tenaciously pursuing your insurer, you can make sure that you get your property on the mend far more quickly.

**Thinking ahead**

Regardless of which defences you have in place for your property, if flood water gets in it will be contaminated. If you have been a victim of flooding, even with an efficient and helpful insurance company behind you, you will have to leave that property for between 6 and 12 months, something that many people do not realise. Your whole property will need to be sanitised, something that is particularly important if you have children.

This means that if your area has been widely affected by flooding, you will be facing a lot of competition for help and support as well as the services that will experience the strain of the flooding. In these situations, it is important to think ahead.

You will need to make sure that you have a place to stay. If there has been huge amounts of flooding, hundreds of people could be displaced and this means that there will eventually be a scramble for the rentals market. By remaining ahead of the curve, you can ensure that you and your family have a place to stay. It is not down to your insurance company to find you a place to stay, so you need to make sure that you are prepared.

**Coordinate with builders and insurers**

Your property will be in turmoil for some time, but you can make sure that you are moving forward by remaining coordinated and keeping an eye on your rebuilding.

There will be two parts to the reconstruction of your home. The first stage will be completed by a reinstatement specialist, who will be bringing the structure of your home back to normal. After this, it will be the contractors that you hire to begin redecorating your home. You can bridge the gap between these by making sure that both parties are aware of the schedule that is in place. This way, you can ensure that you are not left waiting for the builders to begin work weeks after the reinstatement team have finished theirs.
You can also begin putting together the different elements of your new home whilst you are waiting for the reinstatement to be completed. You can begin ordering your new kitchen, bathroom, carpets and furniture, allowing you to begin to feel like you have a place to call home again.

**Make sure that you have the best**

We want to make sure that our customers have the best defences they can to protect them from the damage that flooding can bring. This is why we ensure that the products we provide are the very best. We work with different suppliers to source the most effective products in the marketplace. We make sure that the products we provide are the best for our customers and not for us. This is why we will make sure that we speak with all of our customers, learning from them what it is they need and how we can best help them. So why not get in touch with The Flood Company today?

**CHECKLIST**

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Flood alerts and further information are given on the government environmental website. Here you can register for free flood alerts in your area.
About The Flood Company

The Flood Company started life in 2012, after our local area had been affected by major floods. Having worked within the restoration industry, specialising in dealing with fire and flood damage, we were called out to help clean up the aftermath caused by major flooding nearby. We were tasked with providing specialist drying and repairs for the properties, before beginning the task of reinstating them to the condition that they were in prior to the flooding. Whilst doing this, we noticed that people were repairing the damage done by the floods, but not installing any form of defence.

We then researched the flood defence market and sourced flood defence products to protect the properties in the future, having realised that the properties that we had just reinstated could easily be flooded again. We installed 15 flood barriers for the properties we had just reinstated and began our own company, now known as the “The Flood Company”. Remember that prevention is always cheaper than the cure.

Since then, we have helped hundreds of property owners to defend their premises, helping to limit the amount of damage that can occur. Our ethos is to identify and supply flood protection products for commercial and domestic properties. We recommend the best product to meet our client’s needs and make sure the product they get is the best one for them, not for us.

Having experienced flooding ourselves in 2005, we know how devastating the process can be, not only seeing the damage, but having to leave your house for an incredibly long time whilst repairs are made. This is why we want to build a relationship with our clients, making sure that they are fully prepared and the best protected that they can be from flooding.

www.thefloodcompany.co.uk
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