

# Flooding: information and advice

**Due to the geography of Spelthorne, some properties and land are at risk of flooding.**

This risk is present all year round. However, as winter approaches, flood risk is heightened due to an increased likelihood of rainfall which could cause groundwater to rise, rivers to burst their banks and surface water to build on highways.

This article has been written to provide you with some of the key information to help you prepare for flooding events.



Environment  
Agency



# Flooding responsibilities and contacts

It can be difficult to know exactly who is responsible for what. **If there is a threat to life you should call 999.** In other instances, please find more information below.

Who?	What?	Telephone	Website/webpage/text info
<b>Environment Agency</b>	Lead flood responder in major flooding incidents General flooding advice Report a flood Floodline: Check the current alert and warning status, and sign up for future automated notifications Deployment of temporary defences and other strategic assets Maintenance of structures on main rivers	Switchboard: 03708 506 506  EA Incident Line: 0800 80 70 60  Floodline: 0345 988 1188	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency">www.gov.uk/environment-agency</a> <a href="http://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk">www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk</a> <a href="https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings">https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings</a>
<b>Surrey County Council</b>	Are the Lead Local Flood Authority and have overall strategic responsibility for flood risk management in Surrey, other than that from the 'main' rivers. Additionally, the responsibility for granting (or refusing) consent to alter ordinary watercourses  In addition to highways management, animal disease, Rights of Way, social care and health information  Trading Standards information	Switchboard: 0345 600 9009 Flooded Highways: 0300 200 1003 Locality Team (social care): 01932 794800 Out of hours: 01483 517898  03454 040506	<a href="http://www.surreycc.gov.uk">www.surreycc.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport">www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport</a> <a href="http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/social-care-and-health">www.surreycc.gov.uk/social-care-and-health</a> Report an issue using "Report it" on the Surrey County Council website (General enquiries about flooding: <a href="mailto:flooding.enquiries@surreycc.gov.uk">flooding.enquiries@surreycc.gov.uk</a> )  <a href="http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/trading-standards">www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/trading-standards</a>
<b>Spelthorne Borough Council</b>	Have permissive powers to assist riparian owners in maintaining their ordinary watercourses  In addition to rest centres, housing, assisting with transportation, government grant schemes, management of public open spaces, provision of Environmental Health advice and Building Control	01784 451 499  Out of hours (emergency use only): 01932 425 060	<a href="http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk">www.spelthorne.gov.uk</a> <a href="https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/16996/Flooding-advice">https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/16996/Flooding-advice</a> Please follow us on social media. We will use these accounts to provide up-to-date emergency information: Spelthorne Borough Council - Facebook @Spelthornebc – X (formerly Twitter) @spelthorneboroughcouncil - Instagram
<b>Thames Water</b>	Sewage, flooded sewers and sewer cleaning	0800 316 9800	<a href="http://www.thameswater.co.uk">www.thameswater.co.uk</a>
<b>SSE and UK Power Networks</b>	These are Distribution Network Operators, they own and maintain the power lines to properties in Spelthorne	<b>SSE</b> Emergencies: 0800 072 7282 General Enquiries: 0800 048 3516  <b>UK Power Networks</b> Emergencies: 0800 3163 105 General Enquiries: 0800 029 4285	Visit <a href="http://www.ssen.co.uk/Whoismynetworkoperator">www.ssen.co.uk/Whoismynetworkoperator</a> to check which company is your Distribution Network Operator
<b>Affinity Water</b>	Drinking water	Emergency number: 0345 357 2407	<a href="http://www.affinitywater.co.uk">www.affinitywater.co.uk</a>
<b>Insurance</b>	To advise what is and is not insured and to process claims	Various – specific to the company	Various – specific to the company

# How Spelthorne Borough Council aims to help

The Council has an experienced team who work towards increasing the resilience of Spelthorne to flooding, and who also coordinate the flood response from the Borough Emergency Coordination Centre during a major incident. This response can consist of the following:

- Further supporting established community volunteer groups to increase community resilience.
- Working with partner agencies to support vulnerable residents.
- Facilitating the running of Community Sandbag Distribution Centres in major incidents.
- Assisting evacuation through our community transport and opening Rest Centres for residents in need of temporary shelter.
- Providing short and long term accommodation solutions for residents who have had to evacuate their homes.
- Assisting in community clear up following flooding



## Community resilience

Local knowledge, experience and goodwill is one of the Borough's main assets before, during and after a flood event.

Spelthorne Borough Council, like other responding agencies, is constantly seeking ways to learn from past events and continually improve its processes for dealing with flooding on a large scale. The Council is looking to work closer than ever with local residents to harness this experience, goodwill, and effort. It is recognised that formalising volunteer roles and offering additional help and support to community groups will enable the Borough to establish robust and effective communication networks, and maximise resources for localised needs.

We work with the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council to prepare local communities to cope in times of emergency. We are able to provide community groups with

templates and advice on how to create a community plan that complements the plans of the emergency services and other responding agencies. We can also hold events to bring community groups together to discuss their plans and share knowledge, issues and experiences.

If you are interested in setting up a community group, or already have a group and would like to know more, please contact us so we can update you on important news and events. We can also answer any questions you might have, or meet to discuss potential or existing plans.



Applied Resilience supports the Community Resilience Groups on behalf of Spelthorne Borough Council. If you wish to become involved in a group or would be interested in becoming a community resilience volunteer then please email [news@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:news@spelthorne.gov.uk) for more information.



## Sandbags

Whilst Spelthorne Council cannot provide sandbags for all residents at risk of flooding, we may look to deploy them at a very local level e.g. to protect infrastructure or where sandbags may have a positive net effect on reducing flood risk in some areas. The Council would not deliver sandbags to specific properties, so it is advisable to identify alternative sources from which to acquire sandbags – builders' merchants and local DIY stores may stock sandbags and sand.

Hydrosacs can also be purchased as an alternative to sandbags, which are easier to store and inflated when the threat of flooding is imminent.

If widescale flooding is expected, Community Sandbag Distribution Centres may be set up to allow greater access to sandbags. These centres will be run by volunteers and community groups, facilitated by the Council who will provide equipment, sand and an operating framework.

Sandbags will offer only limited protection and should only be used as a last resort when other measures are not in place - the array of products listed by the National Flood Forum are more likely to protect your home than sandbags.

For full details on Spelthorne's Sandbag Policy, please see our website: [www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/17008/Sandbags](http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/17008/Sandbags)

## Rest centres

The primary purpose of a Rest Centre (usually put in place at the community centres or a suitable hall) is to enable the assessment of affected people's needs during an incident, and in extreme cases to provide basic amenity for people who have evacuated their homes, with provisions such as meals and overnight accommodation. Two types of assessment will be carried out for any person sheltered at a Rest Centre:

### 1. Housing options assessment:

This is the responsibility of Spelthorne Borough Council. This involves considering all of the housing options that may be available for a flood victim, including the provision of emergency accommodation and subsequently longer-term housing options. This process works alongside the Adult Social Care assessment, to address any vulnerabilities that are identified amongst flood victims by Spelthorne Borough Council staff.

### 2. Adult Social Care Assessment:

This is the responsibility of Surrey County Council. This process involves assessing the specific needs of any flood victim who may be identified as vulnerable or is previously known to the multi-agency services already regularly assisting them. It is then the responsibility of Adult Social Care to ensure these individuals may access specific and suitable support, including any

necessary medication and health professionals. This will also include the placement into residential care of any flood victims for whom this level of care is required.

A Rest Centre is intended to provide short-term shelter only, therefore Spelthorne Borough Council will be able to provide transport to assist in moving individuals to more suitable, long-term accommodation.

## Rest Centre locations

**The Greeno Centre** in Shepperton and **Fordbridge Centre** in Ashford are used as two rest centre locations within Spelthorne. However, depending on the scale of the incident, another larger centre may be sought.

Spelthorne Borough Council will communicate the location of a rest centre with residents and partner agencies if one is deemed necessary at the time of the flooding.



# Resilience checklist

If your home or business is at risk of flooding, you should make sure you have your own personal flood plan. Flooding can become a serious problem faster than you'd think, so don't leave this until it actually happens as you will not have time. The Environment Agency have a guide to help with preparing a personal flood plan but below are a few important actions you can take now, to ensure you're ready for a flood in the future:

✓	Actions
	store important documents somewhere safe - preferably higher than the flood waters can reach, but if this is not possible then protect them in polythene
	look into the best ways to stop flood water from entering your property - don't just rely on sandbags, they may not always be available and there are plenty of flood protection products available which can protect your home much more effectively. A directory of these is provided by the National Flood Forum and can be viewed at <a href="http://www.bluepages.org.uk">www.bluepages.org.uk</a>
	check that your insurance policy covers you for flooding
	familiarise yourself with flood warning levels, so that you understand an event as it is unfolding
	identify who can help you in the event of flooding - where you can go, or store possessions, when flooding is imminent. Similarly, identify who you can help - look out for your friends, family and neighbours, particularly those most vulnerable such as the elderly
	if you have pets, identify somewhere safe you can take them before a flood
	if you have a car, identify somewhere safe to move it to ahead of a flood - if this is not possible and your car is already in flood water do not attempt to move it
	make sure you know where the stop-valves are for your water, gas and electricity supplies so that you can turn these off quickly if necessary
	prepare a flood kit, ready to grab in the event of a flood

As mentioned above, you should consider preparing an emergency kit, filled with essential items you might need during a flood. Items you may wish to include are:

✓	Emergency kit items
	important documents, such as your passports and insurance certificates
	wind up torch and radio in case of a loss of power
	rubber gloves and wellington boots – in case you have to come into contact with flood water
	a first aid kit - including any prescription medicine
	bottled water - the water from the tap may become contaminated and certainly do not ever drink flood water
	non-perishable and/or tinned food
	blankets and warm clothing, in case of a prolonged loss of power
	families with children may wish to include some toys - to keep them entertained and distracted



## Flooding dos ✓ and don'ts ✗

### Do:

- ✓ keep together and safe with your family and those around you. Particularly consider any vulnerable or elderly neighbours and make sure they are aware of the situation
- ✓ have an emergency 'grab bag' prepared
- ✓ pay close attention to the advice of the emergency services and local authority. Take all warnings seriously and respond quickly
- ✓ switch off all electrical and gas appliances at the mains - make sure you know how to do this quickly
- ✓ stay alert, and monitor the ongoing situation
- ✓ block downstairs toilets and drains to prevent backflow of sewage - use a sandbag or a strong bin bag filled with soil
- ✓ move important items to a high and safe place within the home

### Don't:

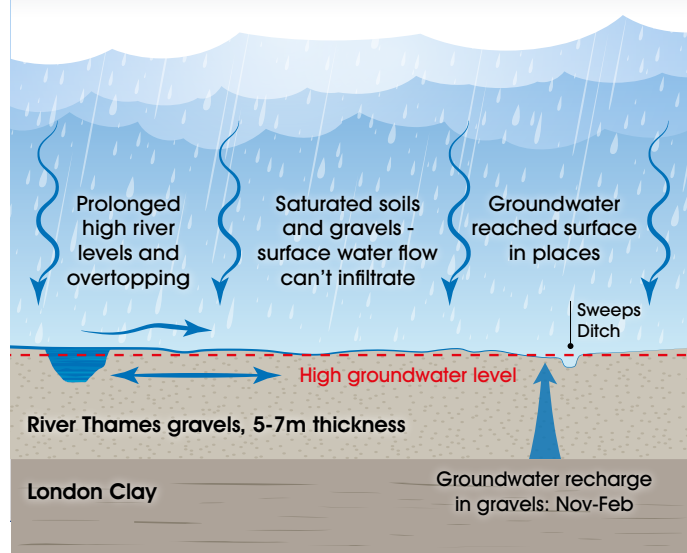
- ✗ don't enter flood water. Only six inches of fast flowing water can knock a person over and there may be unseen hazards - uncovered manholes, sharp edges and unstable surfaces may be hidden beneath the surface
- ✗ don't drive through flood water. Less than two feet of water can be enough to float a car and beneath the water may be hidden hazards such as sudden drops, debris and fallen power lines
- ✗ don't come into contact with flood water - it is often contaminated with sewage and other substances. Wear rubber gloves and boots, and wash thoroughly if you do accidentally come into contact with flood water
- ✗ do not ever attempt to swim through flood water. You may be swept away and being a strong swimmer will not protect you from being struck by flowing debris
- ✗ do not re-enter a flooded area until you are advised it is safe to do so
- ✗ do not enter a property that has been flooded unless you are sure it is structurally safe - if in doubt it should be professionally checked
- ✗ do not turn on your electricity or gas supplies until they have been checked by a qualified electrician/engineer. Be aware of gas leaks - do not smoke or use open flames

## Groundwater and surface water in Spelthorne: what lies beneath

**When people think of flooding, they often picture rivers bursting their banks. However, surface water flooding, where heavy rainfall overwhelms the drainage system, and groundwater flooding, where the water table rises and seeps upwards, can also be a problem.**

There is the potential for groundwater to occur across most of Spelthorne due to the geological makeup of the local area. The underlying bedrock geology in Spelthorne is known as London Clay. On top of the clay there is a layer of river gravel deposits. The cause of groundwater is that water is unable to drain into the impermeable London Clay. This results in the 5-7 metres of gravel lying on top of the clay to be left to hold the groundwater until saturation point, which occurs when there is excessive rain. In this situation the water will appear on the land surface at the lowest points, often overloading foul sewer networks, which can result in a mixture of ground water, surface water and foul sewage flooding from drains to local areas and properties. Pumping the floodwater out will have very little benefit as the high groundwater will continue to replace any water which is pumped out. Only when the groundwater levels drop will the floodwater recede.

**Flooding mechanisms in the Staines-upon-Thames area**  
Prolonged rainfall from weekly storm events Dec 2013 - Feb 2014



For more information on groundwater flooding and how to prepare, please visit [www.spelthorne.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/flooding)

# The work of our partner agencies



## Environment Agency

Spelthorne Borough Council works with the Environment Agency to help residents become more resilient in emergencies. The Environment Agency's free Floodline service gives flooding forecasts, local situation updates and advice for residents and professional partners 24 hours a day, seven days a week (0345 988 1188). It is worth signing up to flood warnings here: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>.

The Environment Agency's maintenance teams continue to carry out annual maintenance and respond to incident reports on the main rivers in Spelthorne. The works have included tree and vegetation clearance, de-silting and removing blockages.

To report watercourse blockages or property flooding please call the EA Incident Line which is staffed 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60.

The Environment Agency also support community groups to raise flood awareness and prepare for flood incidents. Information on creating a personal flood plan and a community flood plan can be found on their website.



## Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council (SCC) as Lead Local Flood Authority for the Spelthorne area has overall strategic responsibility for flood risk management, excluding main rivers. Additionally, SCC have the responsibility for granting (or refusing) consent to alter ordinary watercourses. However, insufficient watercourse maintenance is often the cause of wider flooding, including foods to the road network. Maintenance of ditches and culverts often remains the responsibility of the relevant private landowners and not that of Spelthorne or Surrey County Council. Further details on riparian responsibilities can be found at [www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse).

If you need to report a flood to SCC, please use the 'Report It' link page at [www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk), call their Contact Centre on 03456 009 009, or email [floodingenquiries@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:floodingenquiries@surreycc.gov.uk). To report highway related issues please use the 'Report It' links or visit the "Roads and transport" page at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport). It can then be considered for investigation.



## Thames Water

Thames Water provide wastewater services throughout Spelthorne. Sewer flooding can occur due to several factors, including blockages caused by wet wipes and cooking fat, as well as very heavy rainfall which can occasionally overwhelm the sewage system.

If you experience flooding from a sewer, you should get in touch with Thames Water on 0800 316 9800 who will try to stop the flooding and investigate the cause. Any clean-up will include removing excess liquids, removing most of what has been discharged from the sewer and disinfecting hard surfaced areas (outside only). It is not usually Thames Water's responsibility to dry out your property from internal flooding, remove or replace damaged items, or provide alternative accommodation. In the first instance, you should contact your insurer.



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