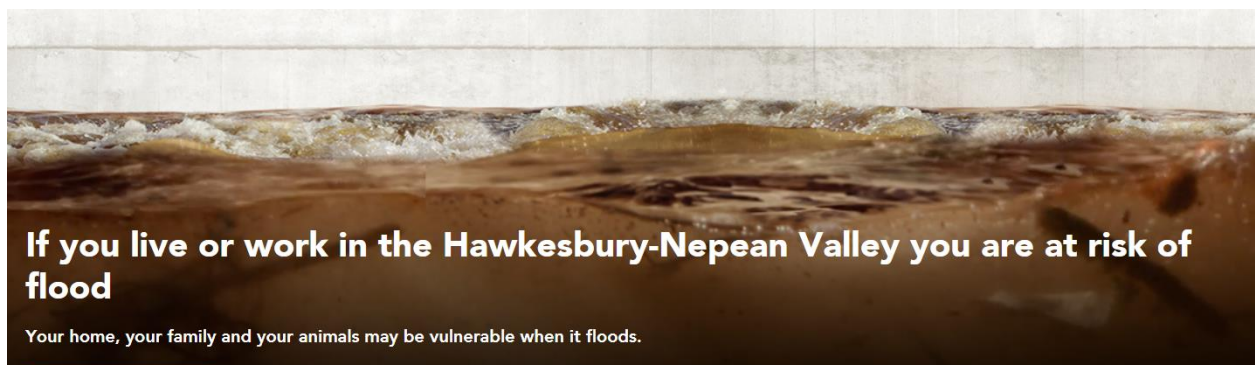


How would I respond to a flood in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley?

Focus: This resource develops students' understanding of the historic occurrence of flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley and provides opportunities for students to consider perspectives and responses to flooding. It investigates how informed choices, relevant and timely information, preparedness and critical problem solving can assist to make choices that reduce, mitigate or remove moderate to severe harm to life and property.

Inquiry Question:

- What are the responses of individuals, groups and government to the impact of a disaster?



<https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/hawkesbury-nepean-floods/>

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has a high risk of flood. That makes knowing how to prepare, get information, understand the risks, plan for disaster, who to connect with and how to protect yourself and your loved ones very important. Being prepared and understanding what to do builds resilience. Resilience protects or reduces the risk of harm and promotes recovery from a disaster.

The High Five Model of Resilience can help you to know your risks, be informed, make safe and important decisions, evacuate safely, connect and be supported by others, protect what you love and rebuild after the disaster.

View the video on historical flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley on the website: <https://youtu.be/jo9VbKbMZ6o>

To build resilience you need to:

- Know the risks
- Connect with others
- Identify your strengths
- Learn about actions to take in an emergency
- Look after your life

This is the High Five Model from Raphael, B. (2010), Preparedness: Facing Future Disasters, Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss and Grief Network.

Being prepared is an important step in building resilience. To prepare you need to consider the following:

- What to do before flooding events occur?
- How warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology about East Coast Lows, rain or floodwater may impact your home, school and daily life.
- How to get relevant and current information?
- When and how to leave and where to go?
- What are things you need to protect, take with you and what you need to leave behind?
- What are your strengths?
- How to stay calm and make good choices about risk?
- Where to go to for help?
- How to care for yourself and others?
- How to overcome fear or uncertainty?
- Who can help?
- When should you ask for help?



Infrastructure NSW, Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Risk Management Strategy

Learning Tasks

Read and discuss the scenarios below and complete the following:

1. What could this character do before the flood event?
2. What sources can the character use to find out about the risks and options for staying or evacuating?
3. How could you discuss the risks about flooding with your parents, school and peers if faced with this situation?
4. Analyse the risks of the flood to the character in this scenario.
5. What other choices should this character consider to reduce, mitigate or lower the potential for harm to them, their loved ones, pets and home?
6. How does this scenario help you think ahead about flood risk in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley?
7. Create a multimedia, revised script or photo story about one of these scenarios and include actions, thoughts and choices that would significantly reduce harm in this event. Use the High Five Model of Resilience or the SES Steps in Preparedness on page 4 to help you.

Steps in Preparedness



www.ses.nsw.gov.au/hawkesbury-nepean-floods/

Clara, 14, Agnes Banks NSW

It's been raining for four days now, and the East Coast Low just keeps dumping rain on our property. It hasn't stopped. The wind's really strong too. There's massive puddles all over the place. Even in my gumboots it's so hard to walk through the mud – it's so thick and sticky.

I've just been told that I need to evacuate. I got a text message, but I'm not sure what to do. Our property is pretty big and I have to get my horse before I go. My parents are at work. I can't call them. I can't call anybody. My phone just lost reception.

There's a really loud knock at the door. I can see someone from the SES is calling to see if there is anyone here. My parents have told me never to answer the door when I'm home alone. I'm don't know what to do. I'm not leaving without my horse. If I get trapped, I'll ride her out of here.



Horses stranded in the Hawkesbury River, 1990 (Image courtesy of ABC TV archives)

William, 12, Windsor NSW

My Pop often talked about the flood of 1867. I can remember him telling the story about his family every year, toasting marshmallows for us over the fire when we went camping. He told us nearly all Windsor was underwater. He said the floodwaters went up to the first floor of the *Doctor's House* in Thompson Square. He'd been told about it by his Pop, and then he told us the story too.

He told me that if it ever flooded I should get out because the floods could get up to 20 metres deep.

Today the Hawkesbury's 11 metres at Windsor. The Great River Walk and Howe Park are covered in a murky brown torrent. There's crap and debris floating down the river. It's kind of scary how quick the river's come up.

I've asked my parents if we've got a family flood plan, but they told me to stop fussing. Dad told me again, "not to worry" and that "we need to stay so that the family business operates for as long as possible." I know that times have been tough, and that dad hasn't renewed the insurance on the business either. But I can't help thinking about what Pop said.



Damian Boyce, 9, clings to a traffic sign during Windsor floods, 1988; Newspix

Caleb, 14, Penrith NSW

It's really wet today so Mum dropped my brother Rory and me at the movies in Penrith. We're going to have a look at new games in the shops when we come out before Mum comes and gets us after work.

When we got out of the movies someone said there's been an order to evacuate because of flooding. Everyone's going a bit crazy. They're acting like the water will be in the carpark here soon. I know the river can get high but that's just nuts.

Mum's not coming for us for a couple of hours. What if she's late? People say the roads are blocked because there's so much traffic. I can't get Rory out on the bus because of his wheelchair. It's an electric one and really expensive so I've got to look after it. Maybe I could walk home and push Rory in his chair and we can meet Mum there. Or maybe we can just go up to the roof of the office block next door and wait it out.

We're really starving and we want to get something to eat but people reckon the food court has closed already. That's crazy - it's only 2:30. I don't get it – it doesn't make sense. And my phone's running out of battery. I don't know what to do.



Nepean River at Penrith in flood, 1992, Penrith City Library

Cassidy, 13, Regentville NSW

My family and I have lived in Regentville since I was a little kid. When mum died, dad moved me, my older brother and sister here so we'd be close to the river. We go out in the boat heaps. Dad says the river has given our family a new life, and that it's really helped since we lost mum.

We're on 'Flood Watch' 'cos there's an East Coast Low that's supposed to bring heaps of rain. That's what the weather people said. I've heard the river can flood, but my brother and sister reckon it won't happen. They've never seen a flood. Anyway, we're in a drought now. There's even water restrictions.

Warragamba Dam is pretty close to where we live, so I'm not that worried. Dad says it'll be able to collect the rain as it's already pretty low. He says there'll be heaps of time for us to evacuate if we have to and even if it did flood, we don't need to worry, as we can always get out in the boat.



Image of Warragamba Dam; Western Sydney University, 2019

Ricardo, 17, Emu Plains NSW

Last week I got my Ps. I'm pretty happy about that. Mum lets me have the car to drive to school but I have to drop off and pick up my little brother Juan from his school.

Today I'm minding Juan at home with me. The weather has been terrible all week. We've got the day off school because the river is rising. I've got heaps of alerts and warnings on my phone. On the radio, I hear the ABC explaining that "the Nepean River is expected to break its banks with flooding in Emu Plains and Penrith."

My mum can't get home to us, and I know she'd want me to get Juan out. We are both a bit scared, but I know what to do: listen to the Bureau and SES and leave early, taking our pet dog Harry, some water and basic food, medication, my phone and some toys for my brother.

As we get closer to the Great Western Highway I notice the traffic backed up right down the road. There's a lot of people evacuating and we need to be patient as it's worse than the morning peak hour.

I call mum. She is hysterical. I tell her to calm down and we are getting out. I've done what the SES said to do. "We are okay, mum. We are doing all the right things, leaving early to avoid any hassles, it's all okay, Juan's with me and we are safe".



Nepean Rowing Club, 1961; Penrith City Library

Riley, 13, Pitt Town NSW

At school this term I studied Geography. We've been looking at topographic maps of our local area and talking about flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. I remember that the teacher mentioned "flood islands," and said that they were really dangerous, as people feel safe but then can get trapped by the floodwater. She even said that it gets so serious that boats can't help, because the water gets too rough. The weather people reckon that this week we will have heaps of heavy rain as the East Coast Low punishes the coast.

My grandmother lives near us in Pitt Town. She's deaf. She can't hear the radio or warnings, and she really struggles to use a mobile phone. I'm pretty worried about my grandmother, and my family. The idea of Pitt Town becoming a flood island is really scary and so my family's decided that if we receive a flood warning we are going to evacuate early and head east towards Sydney. We'll also have all my grandmother's pills and stuff so she will be well looked after.

If we do have to leave, my relatives live in Homebush and they have agreed to help us. We are very lucky to have such a supportive family. It's part of our culture; we all look after each other.



Hawkesbury River in Windsor, 1988; Royal Australian Air Force

Arthur, 15, Bligh Park NSW

I don't really think about flooding a whole lot, even though my teacher has told us that we live and go to school on a floodplain. I get that it is really flat around here and everyone has a really nice house, no troubles, real quiet with some good mates and cousins close by. We live in Bligh Park near Windsor, which I think is awesome. We have a two-storey house, a generator and nice speedboat for fishing trips on the river. My cousins live a few houses away, and they are plumbers and electricians, so we are pretty right. We migrated here, leaving behind a country that was crazy with violence. We have never seen it flood here either, none of us have.

My teacher Ms Payne says we need to be prepared and if heavy rain comes, we need to evacuate and leave when they tell us, and that no generator or speedboat is going to save us. Teachers do get a little hyper when it comes to risk and following instructions. But she seems to know heaps about Geography so I have told my dad we should maybe listen to the ABC, check the NSW SES site and decide what to take with us if something really bad happens.

We're prepared, anyway. I have all my family's numbers saved into my phone so that I can call them if I need to. We've decided that if it does start to flood, we'll evacuate and get my grandparents' who live in McGraths Hill to come with us. They don't speak English and we don't want anything to happen to them if there was an emergency. We also don't want to get caught in the traffic heading out along the evacuation routes so Dad says he will listen and get us on the road out real early.



Hawkesbury River at Windsor, June 1964; Fairfax Media

Amber, 16, Wallacia, NSW

The rain's finally stopped. The flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has been incredible. My friend Ross says that it has never been like this before and we have to go Warragamba Dam to see it. He saw it on the news. He reckons it looks like something out of a movie; there's heaps of water pouring over the dam and it sounds amazing.

I'm not sure about what Ross wants though. My Auntie Amanda is in the SES and she told me not to go sightseeing during the floods.

Ross keeps nagging. He says I can just wear my headphone if it's too loud, like I usually do to keep calm. He's a bit mean about my autism sometimes, but I find it really hard to make friends and I don't want him to get annoyed with me. I'm really stressed. I don't want to go anywhere near the flood water. Our dog is missing in the floods and the sound of the water makes me feel sick. It's really upsetting. Still, Ross keeps asking me to come with him.



Warragamba Dam spilling, 2012; Water NSW

Jacob, 15, Yarramundi, NSW

It's been raining non-stop for days. I'm going crazy stuck at home with no net, no data and no mates to hang with. I really want to get out of here and see what's going on. I've heard there's some pretty sick waves where the river's high. I reckon it'd be worth taking my board out. I'm gunna text Matt and see if he can come with me and check it out. Matt'll be up for it. We can Snapchat it later.

Matt and I take our boards out on our bikes. It takes a while, it's pretty tough going. There's crap, sticks, rubbish everywhere. Mud slicks the whole road and the ride is crazy. I can't see the bridge. It looks submerged, gone completely under. Matt looks wide-eyed, like he can't believe it. I can see he is a little fidgety about getting his board in the water. It looks nasty, oozy brown and stinks like you wouldn't believe. I don't want to miss out on this, it may never happen to get such ridiculous flood action again. I look at Matt trying to see if I can con him a little regardless of the stench. He looks really nervous. I'll keep at him, I know he'll cave. His room stinks just like this, I tell him. I can see he is getting used to the idea. We are going to get a totally amazing selfie; Matt and me, no bridge, riding the floodwaters.



Flooding at Yarramundi Bridge 2012, NSW SES

Hannah, 15, Lower McDonald, NSW

The Hawkesbury is still rising, and the Bureau says it's going to reach the peak tonight. The ferry at Wiseman's had to stop running so I can't get to school at Windsor. That's kind of cool, but I miss my friends. Mum and Dad can't get to work either. They're both volunteers with the RFS anyway, so today they're going to be out helping people who live closer to the river evacuate to higher properties. I'll be home alone with Tilly our Labrador.

Me and my family have only been living at Lower Macdonald for three years. This is our first flood. Our neighbours Bill and Joan said we might be isolated for days, and the power will probably fail. I'm a bit worried that we haven't got enough food. I'm creeped out about snakes coming inside. What will we do when there's no power? But Bill and Joan are really kind and reckon everyone helps each other out, so we'll all be fine. I hope they're right.

I'm trying to get a bit organised so we're ready for the flood. I've got all the phone and everything else charging. I've got some torches and candles and matches out. I'm making sure Tilley stays close. I'm making some sandwiches for Mum and Dad and anyone else who needs a feed. And I'm feasting on ice cream, because – hey – someone's gotta eat it before it melts when the power goes off.

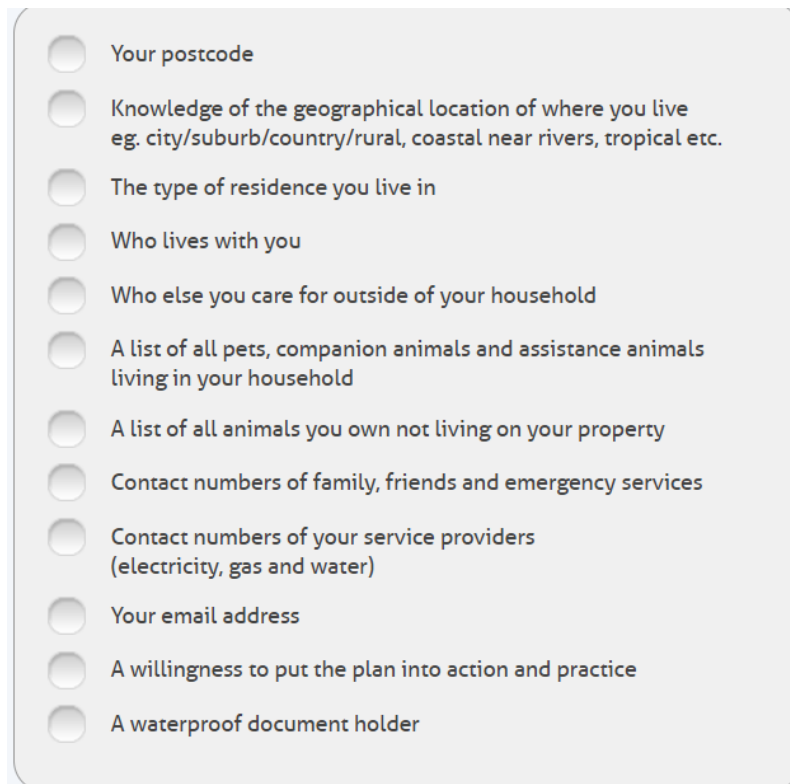


Flooding in Windsor area, 1961; Vic Gillespie Collection

Next Steps

- Use this checklist and resources from the NSW SES to develop an Emergency Plan:

<http://www.seshomeemergencyplan.com.au/index.php>



- What have you learnt about risks of flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley historically and today?
- What have you learnt about building resilience and the choices you will make in a flood event?
- What would you do differently to these characters in a flood event?

