

Protecting our Flood Warning Service offering during the Coronavirus pandemic period

Background

We are currently planning for how to protect our flood warning service if severe resource constraints prevent our usual level of operation during the Coronavirus pandemic period.

The Coronavirus pandemic is anticipated to place extraordinary pressure on the Environment Agency, particularly as sickness and other absences peak. Consequently, we propose some changes to the Flood Warning Service so we can continue to issue warnings wherever reasonable and practicable in the current circumstances. These changes are also intended to preserve our ability to provide warnings where most necessary and to support our activities during the Coronavirus pandemic period to protect lives and livelihoods.

Changes to the Flood Warning Service

The EA's flood warning service provides three types of messages that help people prepare for flooding and take action:

- Flood Alerts – flooding is possible; be prepared
- Flood Warnings – flooding is expected; immediate action required
- Severe Flood Warnings – severe flooding; danger to life

In order to sustain an effective flood warning service during the Coronavirus pandemic, the Environment Agency (EA) will be making some minor changes to the service.

These measures are being introduced to ensure we protect our critical Flood Warning and Severe Flood Warning services, which protect lives and livelihoods, whilst minimising disruption and potential anxiety in communities.

Flood Alerts

We will Issue Flood Alerts by exception only.

We will only issue Flood Alerts where:

- spray / waves overtopping may cause risk to life
- lives may be at risk due to minor road closures
- livelihoods depend on them in farming communities
- the Alert will prompt an operational action by communities or partners, for example putting out property level flood defences.

However, we will not issue Flood Alerts for:

- minor spray / wave overtopping from the sea;
- flooding of fields, recreation land and car parks where there are no actions for the public or partners;
- flooding of minor road infrastructure that doesn't lead to road closure;
- localised surface water flooding (i.e. overflowing drains due to heavy storms)

Flood Warnings and Severe Flood Warnings

There will be no change to the issuing of Severe Flood Warnings, where there is risk to life, and Flood Warnings, where flooding is expected.

Message update frequency

We will only update Flood Alert, Flood Warning and Severe Flood Warnings messages once a day (During 0900-1700) unless there is a significant change to the forecast impacts, in which case we will update these messages more frequently to reflect the ongoing flood incident.

When will this be happening?

We are looking to implement these changes on 24 April 2020.