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Young people least aware of flooding risk, Environment Agency warns

Young people are the group least aware of the dangers of flooding in their area, as well as what to do if flood warnings are issued, research has suggested.

The Environment Agency and British Red Cross are urging younger people to learn how to look after themselves and their communities in times of flooding.

The call comes after research by the Environment Agency revealed 18-to-34-year-olds are least likely to know if where they live is at risk of flooding and how to protect their homes and possessions from flood waters.

Less than half of those under 35 (48%) would know what to do if a flood warning was issued, the research shows.

More than five million homes and businesses in England are at risk of flooding, with flood damage to a home costing £30,000 on average, and scientific projections show the risk of floods in the UK will increase with climate change, the Environment Agency said.

A flooded home can also have long-term mental health impacts, with research from Public Health England showing a third of people who were flooded in 2014 suffering from depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder – and nearly a quarter were still suffering impacts two years later.

The Environment Agency is partnering with the Red Cross to launch its flood action campaign to encourage young people to learn how to cope with flooding and to join a network of community reserve volunteers to help if their local area is hit.

Caroline Douglass, director of incident management and resilience at the Environment Agency, said: "The terrible impacts of flooding can last long after the flood waters have receded.

"But simple actions can lessen the damage to your home, protect your wellbeing and help you recover more quickly.

"Our flood defences protect thousands of homes around the country but we can never entirely eliminate the risk of flooding, which is why it's crucial to know how to protect yourself when it hits."

Advice for preparing for, acting in and surviving a flood includes checking flood warnings, preparing a bag with medicines and insurance documents, turning off gas and electricity, moving the family to safety and calling 999 if in immediate danger.

Simon Lewis, head of emergency response at the British Red Cross, said: "Flooding can have a catastrophic impact on homes and communities, causing untold damage to the things and the people we treasure most.

"That's why it's vital we all know what to do, and how to help, to lessen the impact and help communities rebuild and recover faster.

"Sadly we cannot always stop things like this from happening, but by becoming a community reserve volunteer, young people across the UK could help make a difference should the worst happen."

More than 5,000 people have signed up to the community reserve volunteers scheme, with the British Red Cross aiming to create a national network of 10,000 people.

– For advice on flooding, people can visit: flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/what-to-do-in-a-flood

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