

FLASH FLOODS

Floods, especially flash floods, are the greatest weather-related killers. Flood related deaths outnumber all other weather related deaths. During the 1980s alone there was an average of 110 deaths per year in the United States.

Most victims are caught in floodwaters when they attempt to cross supposed “low points” in vehicles or by foot. They become stranded or swept away with the current. Floodwaters are different from gulf and beach waters in the sense that floodwater is relentless. There is no lull as there is between sets of waves on the beach.

One of the most dangerous characteristics is that the water level rises dramatically over a short period of time and before you know it, you are swept away. If you are swept up against an object by the swift moving current you can easily drown.

THE DROWNING MACHINE

Low head dams are one of the most dangerous hazards. A low head dam can be manufactured or appear naturally. Low head dams are obstructions across the path of a river, or area of moving water, which increases the upstream water level, but allows the river to flow over the top. The water that flows over this dam can form a cylindrical current back toward the dam itself. If you are swept over with the water flow you enter this cylindrical current. This is known as the drowning machine. Even people in flotation devices have been held under water and have drowned in this situation.

During floods, elevated roads and bridges can become “low head dams”. This occurs when the water level rises above the roadway and spills over the other side. It only takes the depth of an inch or two to create enough force to have your feet come out from under you and you can be swept away.