

Press Release – Press Release Date Scheduled for April 16, 2019

Report identifies cost-effective ways homeowners can protect themselves from the top climate change cost in Canada – basement flooding

With the right information and often for less than \$250, homeowners can protect themselves from the increasing risks of basement floods, according to a report from the University of Waterloo.

A new, multi-year project carried out by Waterloo's Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation has identified the most common flood risks for Canadian homeowners, and has identified the most cost-effective steps that homeowners can take to protect themselves from basement flooding. In light of a major report recently released from Environment and Climate Change Canada, highlighting the increasing risk of future flooding, guidance on home flood protection is timely.

"For many Canadians, their home is their biggest asset and ultimately their retirement fund," said Blair Feltmate, Head of the Intact Centre and a professor at Waterloo's Faculty of Environment. "To protect that investment, any homeowner who lives where it rains can easily and cost-effectively deploy simple measures to lower their chances of experiencing basement flooding."

"To date, many homeowners have simply not known what to do to protect their homes from flooding – this report corrects that omission by identifying actions that most homeowners can act upon, generally over a weekend."

The project examined results from home flood risk assessments completed by flood risk assessors at over 500 homes in southern Ontario and Saskatchewan in 2017 and 2018. The report summarizes the most common factors that put homes at increased risk of water flowing into basements through ground level windows, through basement drains and seeping in through basement walls.

Home assessments in Ontario found a number of common issues inside the home, including no backup sump pump or backup power (85 per cent), furniture and electronics at risk of water damage (71 per cent), a lack of maintenance of backwater valves (53 per cent), and a failure to maintain sump pumps (40 per cent).

Assessments also found common issues outside the home, including low window wells (82 per cent), downspouts that deposit water less than 2 meters from the foundation (78 per cent), poor grading that directs water towards the foundation (69 per cent), and cracks or gaps in the basement windows (63 per cent).

The report also identified step-by-step actions that can be taken by residents, often for less than \$250. That is money wisely invested, given that the average cost of repairing damage from a basement flood reached \$43,000 in 2018.

Examples of easily deployable steps that residents can take to reduce flood risk include:

- Completing spring and fall maintenance of existing flood protection features in their homes, which includes clearing out nearby storm drains, removing debris from eaves troughs, testing sump pumps and cleaning out backwater valves.
- Completing flood protection upgrades themselves, including storing valuables and hazardous materials in watertight containers and raising them off the floor, installing window well covers and extending sump pump discharge pipes and downspouts at least 2 meters away from the foundation or to the nearest drainage swale.
- Working with contractors and seeking permits and flood protection subsidies from their local municipalities to disconnect their downspouts from foundation drains, raise the height of window wells, install backwater valves and install a backup sump pump and backup power supply.

The project determined that conversations and in-person professional advice were the best way to encourage homeowners to take the necessary steps to protect their properties.

“Our project tested the effectiveness of various outreach approaches to motivate residents to address basement flood risk,” said Cheryl Evans, Director of the Home Flood Protection Program at the Intact Centre. “Sending out flyers and posting tips on social media helps to raise awareness, but that is not enough. Residents trust advice from flood-impacted neighbours, insurance providers and even informed staff at hardware stores.”

“One-on-one conversations with people they trust make all the difference for many people.”

Following the assessment, 79 per cent of residents surveyed took at least one action to reduce their flood risks, and after 6 months 71 per cent of residents took at least one additional action. Over 60 per cent of the actions taken by homeowners cost less than \$500.

Refer to www.homefloodprotect.ca for flood protection videos, fact sheets and cost-effective tips for reducing flood risk.

Support for the Ontario component project was received from Intact Financial Corporation, the Ontario government, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the City of Toronto, and the City of Burlington.

About the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation

Founded in 2015 with a gift from Intact Financial Corporation, Canada’s largest property and casualty insurer, the Intact Centre helps homeowners, communities and businesses to reduce risks associated with climate change and extreme weather events.

About the University of Waterloo

University of Waterloo is one of Canada’s top innovation universities. With more than 36,000 students and the world's largest co-operative education system of its kind, its unmatched entrepreneurial culture,

combined with an intensive focus on research, powers one of the top innovation hubs in the world. For more information, visit www.uwaterloo.ca.

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Residents Available for Phone Interviews about their Participation in a Home Flood Protection Assessment

Note: Please email first to set up a phone interview time

Anne Vallentin – avallentin@gmail.com 905-512-1745 (Ontario)

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Darilyn Weiss – darilynweiss@gmail.com 306-222-0739 (Saskatchewan)

Relevant Links

- **Report:** <https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Home-Flood-Protection-Program-Report-1.pdf>
- **Report shortlink:** <http://bit.ly/2Pe9N4B>
- **Infographics:**

- **Water on the Rise Summary Infographic:**
https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Water-on-the-Rise-Infographic_V12_2019.04.12-all-logos.pdf
- **3 Steps to Basement Flood Protection Infographic with logos:**
https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Three-Steps-to-Basement-Flood-Protection-Infographic_final-2019.02.15.pdf
- **3 Steps to Basement Flood Protection Infographic with no logos:**
https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/English_No-Brand_Three-Steps-to-Basement-Flood-Protection-Infographic_final_No-Brand.pdf