When properly placed, sandbags will redirect water and debris flows away from property improvements.

- Fill sandbags half full. Sand is suggested if readily available; however, it is not mandatory, as any local soil may be used.
- Fold top of sandbag down and rest bag on its folded top. Care should be taken to stack sandbags in accordance with the photos and illustrations. Place each sandbag as shown, completing each layer prior to starting the next layer. Limit placement to three layers unless a bracing is used as a backing or sandbags are stacked in a pyramidal style.

Limitations of sandbags:
- Sandbags will not seal out water.
- Sandbags deteriorate when exposed to continued wetting and drying.
- If placed too early, bags may not be effective when needed.

RELATED LINKS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program
State of California Department of Water Resources
www.water.ca.gov/floodmgmt
State of California Governors Office of Emergency Services
www.caloes.ca.gov
National Flood Insurance Program
www.floodsmart.gov
NOAA National Weather Service
www.weather.gov
Fires in our watersheds can amplify the need to prepare, and prepare early. Fires have impacted watersheds in our County for decades. A burned watershed creates a new dynamic that should heighten everyone’s awareness. While in many cases, flooding occurs from sustained rainfall over days that triggers flood flows, a burned watershed can yield the same result, or worse, with a single rainfall that would otherwise not even cause runoff.

Even if you never experienced a major flood, you ought to know what to do if flood waters threaten your community. While some years have an increased risk, say after wild fires, or El Nino predictions, any given year can produce flooding that can impact you and your family. Like the County Flood Control District, you should prepare every year for the potential of flooding.

FIRE AND EROSION

Following a fire, watershed conditions change dramatically. Impacts associated with fires include:
- A dramatic increase in rainfall runoff velocity and volume,
- Extremely high yields of silt and sediments off hillsides and adjacent properties,
- Potential for debris flows including large rocks and trees,
- Heightened potential for creek overflow and flooding.

Individual property owners have the responsibility to provide protection to their private property and manage debris and damage generated from their property. Property owners should carefully survey their property, identify hazards and the steps to protect their property, and limit debris and uncontrolled drainage runoff. The assistance of technical professionals may be advantageous. Hazards could take the form of hillside erosion from your property, or from your neighbor’s; flooding and debris from denuded properties, and creek overflows.

Protecting Roads

If slopes above and below roads are not protected after a fire, it can be challenging for you and your neighbors to access your homes during and immediately after a storm. The County maintains the roadway, shoulders, and the drains underneath the road. In most cases the road right-of-way extends only a short distance off of the pavement. This means drainages, slopes, and vegetation above and below the road are the responsibility of private property owners. Good erosion protection, drainage control, and vegetation strategies on your property can help limit impacts to roads and maintain access to your homes during the rainy season.

Debris Control

There are a variety of inexpensive ways to control debris flow on your property during a storm. Most items can be installed with normal household tools and consist of materials readily available at your local lumber yard. These items include lumber, sandbags, sand, and plywood.

General rules for debris flow control:
- Direct debris flows away from improvements.
- Place protection to deflect debris, not to dam it.
- Consider boarding up windows that might be in the path of debris.
- Try to work with affected neighbors.
- Install slope protection, vegetation, and other measures to reduce debris flow prior to rainfall.