

THE IMPACTS OF STORMS

It is important to think more about storms, how they are formed, their potentially devastating impacts and whether you are resilient to them. Planning in advance is essential, especially if you live in areas that may be more vulnerable than others, for example, those located next to rivers or on the coast.



Image: The Flood Hub



Storm surge
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Image: The Flood Hub

Winter storms can bring some of the most severe and extreme weather events, including lower temperatures, gale-force winds and heavy rain, which can lead to flooding in some areas or sleet and snow if the temperature is cold enough.

Storms occur at mid-latitudes where cold polar air meets warmer tropical air and the point where these two meet is known as the jet stream. Rising air from the Atlantic is removed and replaced by the strong winds of the jet stream a lot quicker than the air at lower levels and this reduction in pressure produces the strong winds of winter storms. Storms tend to form in the winter months when the temperature between the air masses is at its greatest.

It is important to keep as safe and resilient as you can against the potential impact of storms. On the 5th and 6th December 2015, Storm Desmond brought strong winds of up to 81 mph and heavy rainfall, with 341.4mm of rain falling in Cumbria by 6pm on the 5th (24 hours) – a new UK record!

Many people across Cumbria and Lancashire were severely affected:

- 5200 homes were flooded.
- 61,000 homes in Lancaster lost power when an electrical substation was flooded.
- Many major roads were flooded across the north of England.
- Rail services were disrupted.



Carlisle Civic Centre amid floodwater
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If you were affected by storms, such as Storm Desmond in 2015 or Storm Ciara and Storm Dennis in 2020, are you more resilient to the potential impacts now than you were before?

Even if you have never flooded before, excess rainfall from a storm could overwhelm drains and lead to flash flooding or surface water flooding. Therefore, it is still important to prepare, even if you don't live by a river or the coast.

Identifying a warning trigger, having a plan and installing property flood resilience can all help to increase your resilience to the effects of storms.