

# City Bridges

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Winter 2010

News to keep you connected to Albany City government

## Managing Our City's Forest

The City of Albany has cared for the public's trees for more than 20 years. This care includes planting, hazardous tree evaluations and removals, and pruning of more than 17,000 trees on public property. Like streets and sidewalks, public trees are a part of the City's infrastructure and a significant natural asset.

The value of Albany's trees is estimated at about \$16 million. Unlike the value of buildings and equipment that may decline with age, the monetary value of trees is constant or increases over time. This valuable resource constitutes Albany's urban forest.

### Benefits of the urban forest

The urban forest reduces air pollution, slows stormwater runoff, and helps conserve energy. These reduce the cost of water and wastewater systems and building operations while increasing health and well-being for Albany residents.

The urban forest enhances curb appeal. Reports from the National Arbor Day Foundation have shown that people will stay and shop longer where parking lots and streets are lined with trees. Office and apartment complexes landscaped with trees rent more quickly, and tenants stay longer. Employees are more productive and miss less work at businesses with trees.

Trees can also significantly increase property values, according to reports by the National Association of Homebuilders; trees can add from 7%-25% value to specific properties. The values of lots and homes in areas with trees were, on average, 15 percent higher than those without trees.



### Management strategies

Trees in an urban environment require care. Young trees need water, mulching, pruning, fertilizing, and pest control.

With proper planning and care, young trees will mature and need less maintenance. The City of Albany's urban forest has trees that were planted decades ago, often with little thought to their future. Many were planted in spaces too small for their roots to grow, were never properly pruned, or may be undesirable species. The results are trees that have heaved sidewalks and curbs, clogged pipes, are growing into power lines, or are damaged or diseased and in danger of breaking or falling. Trees that are planted and cared for properly and

consistently will be healthier and benefit the community longer.

Today, the City of Albany has a comprehensive strategy for managing our city's public trees. The Urban Forestry Management Plan details standards and specifications for tree care, maintenance, preservation, and removal. A City Tree Commission was established in 1994. Appointed by the City Council, Tree Commission members help further the work of the Urban Forestry Program.

Two City codes relate to trees. Chapter 7.98 of the Albany Municipal Code establishes standards for public tree care and maintenance, as well as permit criteria for removing any tree within the City limits that is larger than 6 1/2 feet in circumference. Albany Development Code Chapter 9.205-208 defines tree felling criteria related to development projects. Each of these has helped establish the standards of tree care for Albany to ensure healthy and safe trees for future residents to enjoy.

The Urban Forestry Program strives for a high quality of tree care and customer service. This is why the City of Albany has been nationally recognized as a Tree City USA for 15 consecutive years. This recognition is a result of Albany residents' support of a healthy urban forest and proactive City forest management.

If you're interested in more information about urban forestry in Albany, visit our Web site at [www.cityofalbany.net/parks/urbanforestry](http://www.cityofalbany.net/parks/urbanforestry), or contact the City Forester at 541-917-7679.

## Are You Ready for Winter Emergencies?

For links to all the booklets, kit lists, and other resources listed below, go to [cityofalbany.net/areyouready](http://cityofalbany.net/areyouready)

You can help your family be ready for winter weather and other emergencies. Here are some simple recommendations:

### Have A Family Plan

- Your family may not be together when disaster strikes; so plan how you will contact one another. Think about how you will communicate in different situations.
- Complete a contact card for each family member. Have family members keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse, or backpack. Send one to school with each child to keep on file. Pick a friend or relative who lives out of state for household members to notify they are safe.
- A Family Communications Plan should be completed, discussed as a family, and posted so the contact information is readily accessible to all family members. A copy should also be included in your family disaster supplies kit.

### Check your Home Disaster Kit

- Your disaster supply kit should contain essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days. Designate a special place for it and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.
- Consider having supplies for sheltering for up to two weeks. For more items that should be included in your Home Disaster Kit, see the City of Albany Web site [www.cityofalbany.net](http://www.cityofalbany.net) for a disaster booklet with additional helpful information.
- Make sure you can survive without power for at least 24 hours. Do you have the tools you need to keep your family warm and safe if the power goes out? Can you open and cook the food in your emergency supply kit without electric power? Be sure to have supplies that will work with and without electricity.

### Check your Vehicle Emergency Kit

If you plan to travel this winter, review and update your vehicle emergency kit. Include food, water, first aid supplies, flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies. Go to [www.cityofalbany.net](http://www.cityofalbany.net) for a disaster booklet with more information on vehicle emergency kits.

## Albany Officer Honored for Saving a Life

A few times during a police officer's career, he or she can say they helped save a life. When those instances occur, the law enforcement profession makes an effort to recognize those individuals for their actions. The most recent life-saving incident involving an Albany Police Officer was on October 13, 2008.

Corporal Stephanie Warren was on patrol when she heard that medics were dispatched to a nearby business. Corporal Warren responded to the location, arriving before the medics. She found an employee of the business was unconscious and not breathing. A customer in the business had already begun first

aid by doing chest compressions. Corporal Warren assisted by providing life-saving breaths to go along with the chest compressions. Medics arrived, and the victim ultimately survived.

The citizen and Corporal Warren were awarded and presented Life Saving Merit Awards by the Albany Police Department for their actions. The victim helped present those awards at a City Council meeting on January 28, 2009.

Corporal Warren also received the Oregon Peace Officers Association (OPOA) Life Saving

Award at the annual OPOA Awards Banquet in Newport, Oregon, on November 20, 2009.

*"People who become police officers almost always choose the career because they want to make a difference and serve the community. Saving a life is one of the most selfless and honorable things any one can do. Whether saving a life, protecting us from harm, or educating the public, I am proud of our law enforcement professionals who serve the citizens of Albany."*

—JEFF HINRICH, CAPTAIN



### Past recipients of the Life Saving Award are:

- Officer Jed Wilson September 2006
- Officer Doug Newquist July 2005
- Officer Robert Hayes September 2000
- Captain Ben Atchley May 1998

## City of Albany Directory

## Mayor

Sharon Konopa 926-6812

## Ward I Councilors

Dick Olsen 926-7348

Floyd Collins 928-2961

## Ward II Councilors

Bill Coburn 928-0649

Ralph Reid, Jr. 928-7382

## Ward III Councilors

Bessie Johnson 791-2494

Jeff Christman 926-0528

## City Manager

Wes Hare 917-7505

## City Hall Phone Numbers

General Information 917-7500

Ambulance Billing 917-7710

Building Inspection 917-7553

City Manager 917-7500

Downtown

Carnegie Library 917-7585

Engineering 917-7676

Finance Office 917-7500

Fire Department 917-7700

Human Resources 917-7500

Main Library 917-7580

Mayor/Council Line 917-7503

Municipal Court 917-7740

Parks &amp; Recreation 917-7777

Planning and Zoning 917-7550

Police Department 917-7680

Public Information Office 917-7507

Senior Center 917-7760

Transit 917-7667

Water and Sewer Billing 917-7547

Water/Sewer/Streets 917-7600

## Emergencies (Fire, Police, Ambulance) Dial 911

City Bridges is published by an editorial team from the City of Albany. Questions and input about this newsletter can be directed to:

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# Albany Transit *Keeping the Community Moving*

## Who We Are and What We Do

The City of Albany's transit and paratransit systems are working to meet the transportation needs of Albany and the surrounding areas. The Albany Transit System (ATS) and Linn-Benton Loop (Loop) provide fixed-route bus service to the general public, students, employees, senior citizens, and disabled persons. Albany Call-A-Ride (C-A-R) serves senior and disabled individuals, providing curb-to-curb service to those unable to use regular transit services.

Albany Transit ridership reached record highs in 2008-2009 with a total 81,714 for Albany Transit and 104,366 for the Loop; and Call-A-Ride provided 19,142 rides for a total of 205,222 rides.

Currently, Albany Transit operates within the city limits of Albany, Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The Linn-Benton Loop makes 11 runs a day between Albany and Corvallis, Monday through Friday, 6:25 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The Linn-Benton Loop operates on Saturdays and holidays from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Call-A-Ride serves residents of Albany and Millersburg Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For more information call 541-917-7667.

## A Brief History

Albany Transit System was established as the Greater Albany Shuttle in 1974 during

the "gas crunch." The bus logo was the acronym GAS. The service later became Albany Transit.

In 1980, the City of Albany added service to Corvallis, connecting Linn and Benton Counties. Appropriately, the new service was named the Linn-Benton Loop, or just "The Loop" for short.

Call-A-Ride (C-A-R) came on the scene in the early 1980s. It started out with donated used cars and was operated entirely by volunteers providing rides to Albany seniors. In 1984, C-A-R began 20 years of operating from the Senior Center. In 1990, the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed, and C-A-R became the paratransit part of Transit, adding service to the disabled as the law requires. In 2006, Transit and Paratransit began working in the same office; today, both are housed at City Hall, working together to meet the transportation needs of the residents of Albany.

## Improvements Underway

Kittleson and Associates, Inc., is completing a planning study of Albany Transit, looking at existing services and comparing it with services of cities of equal size and population, and will make recommendations for improvements. Albany Transit will present the study this winter to the Albany City Council and the public to consider implementing recommended service changes as resources permit.

Albany Station is the transportation hub for Linn County and provides connections with major transportation providers, such as ATS, the Loop, Linn Shuttle, Valley Retriever, and Amtrak. The old Railway Express Agency (REA) building at the transit station is being refurbished and will be the future home of Albany Transit and Call-A-Ride.

Contractors are working on the REA parking lot, funded primarily by American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds. The REA building will be restored to its original condition with a few minor changes in the interior and updated plumbing and electrical systems. Funding for the REA building renovation was secured through the Federal Surface Transportation Program. The building restoration will begin in early 2010.

Change is inevitable, and Albany Transit is working to keep up with the changes. Population, the environment, economic development, and the needs of our residents are just a few issues taken into consideration as we make plans for the future. We are looking forward to a future that incorporates technology, looks out for the environment, and provides the best service possible for the people in our community. In this case, change is a good thing.

For schedules, maps, and fares, go to  
[cityofalbany.net/bus](http://cityofalbany.net/bus)

## Library Program Focuses on Food for Healthy Kids

Practical Ideas for Feeding Kids Well is the topic of a free two-hour session for parents of children of all ages at Albany Public Library, 2450 14th Avenue SE, at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, January 23, 2010. Child care and refreshments will be provided.

The event will include easy and inexpensive meal and snack

ideas that can help families eat well and discuss what to do if a child refuses to eat healthy foods. The session is sponsored by the Library, Linn-Benton Community College, Albany Parks & Recreation, Samaritan Health Systems, and Oregon State University Extension Service.

## Dog License Law, Exemption Permit Process Working Well

Four months after Albany's dog licensing and two-dog limit exemption law went into effect, Police report that the change has been smooth and is proving beneficial.

City ordinance limits the number of dogs per household in Albany to two, but dog owners can apply for an exemption permit to keep up to four dogs. Exemption applications are available on the City of Albany Web site and at the Police Department, where the applications are processed.

The criteria and restrictions for obtaining the exemption are outlined on the application. The application requires specific information on the applicant and all other individuals residing in the home. It also asks for detailed information on each dog that is kept at the residence, including license information from Linn or Benton County Dog Control, ID tags, and/or identifying microchip numbers. The application form includes the Albany Municipal Code language that applies to dogs, including the new exemption. The form is self-explanatory and easy to fill out.

Seventeen households have applied for and received exemptions since the law took effect in August 2009.

Police are still educating the public about the exemption process, typically giving warnings to dog owners who have more than two adult dogs (over six months old) and no exemption. Police Officers and Community Service Officers issue the warnings.

No warnings are issued for unlicensed dogs, since licenses have been required by state law for decades. The Police

Department feels strongly about licensing dogs for several reasons. Licenses help animal control officers find the owners of lost or injured dogs. They also help Police hold dog owners accountable when they allow their dogs to run at large or attack other animals or people. Licenses follow dogs from one owner to the next and allow Police to place restrictions on dogs that have bitten or attacked people in the past.

One of the most important reasons for dog licensing is to keep deadly diseases such as rabies under control. Rabies is still around, and it is 99% fatal if not treated in time. The counties, which issue dog licenses, require that owners provide proof that their dogs have been immunized against rabies and that those immunizations are current. Licensing also helps Environmental Health staff track dog bites, disease occurrences, and testing for the disease.

When a dog is licensed through Linn County and the rabies vaccination is on file, Albany Police have a choice in where to quarantine dogs that have bitten someone – at the owner's residence or in a secure facility. Without confirmed vaccinations, Police will impound the dog in a facility for ten days. The owner is responsible for paying for the quarantine.

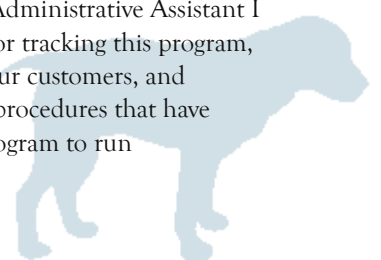
The Albany Police Department handles approximately 1,200 dog complaints a year. From August 7, when the new laws took effect, through the first week of November, officers issued 40 citations for dog-related offenses. Many more warnings were issued in our attempt to educate citizens about the dog laws.

"Hopefully, by actively addressing these issues through education and enforcement, our citizens can live happily next to responsible dog owners and our staff can address dog-related livability issues more effectively and with ease," said Sgt. Curtis Hyde, supervisor for the Community Resource Unit.

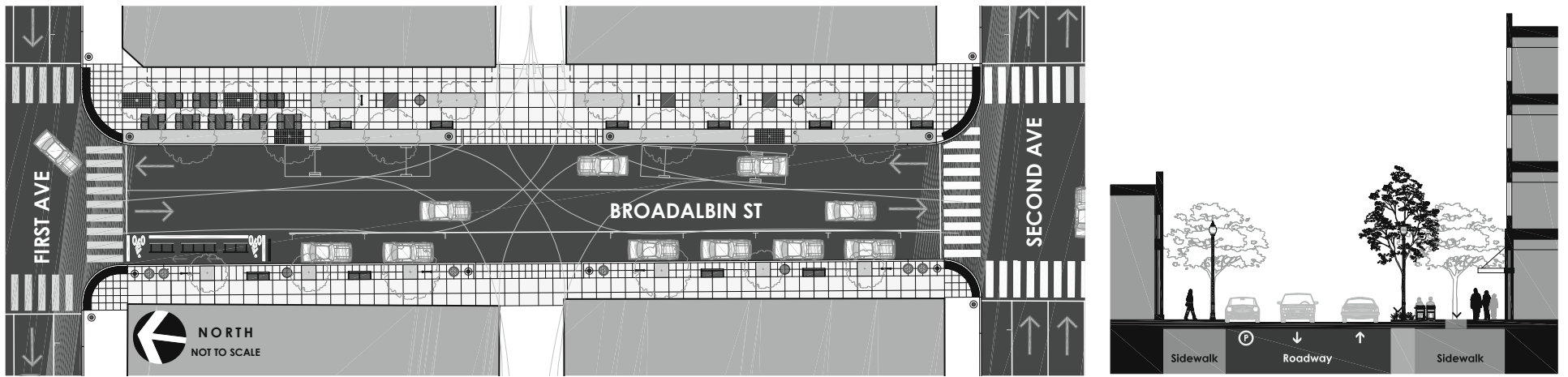
Hyde added: "Many thanks to the Mayor and the Albany City Council for hearing the citizens of Albany and the Police Department prior to implementing a new dog ordinance that regulates the number of dogs allowed in each household and changing the fee structure. Who better to have input from than the people who would be directly affected?"

"The Council understands this issue is much bigger than a two-dog limit per household. It impacts many departments and agencies in and around the city of Albany. Ultimately, the people most likely to be affected are the citizens of Albany (dog lovers and non-dog lovers) and animal control officers. I believe these ordinances assist all affected groups. The ordinance gives more options to responsible dog owners who desire to keep more than two dogs and also helps public safety officers to hold less-responsible owners accountable for their dogs.

"We have received positive citizen input from applicants; and thanks to Albany Police Administrative Assistant I Meaza Ridley for tracking this program, working with our customers, and implementing procedures that have allowed this program to run smoothly."



# Plans for Broadalbin Promenade Move Forward



The Central Albany Revitalization Area (CARA) Agency has approved a final design plan for the new promenade on Broadalbin Street between First and Second Avenues. This winter, the Public Works Engineering Department will complete engineering and construction documents for the pilot project, which is scheduled to be built next spring.

The Broadalbin Promenade will widen the sidewalk on the east side of the street, adding 10 feet, making the sidewalk 22 feet wide; add trees, seating and historic lamp-

posts; and will eliminate parking on that side. Parking spaces will still be available on the west side of the street, which will receive trees, pots for colorful annual flowers and historic streetlamps. The street will remain open to two-way traffic.

The promenade project came off the shelf within the last year because plans for the renovated Cusick Bank Building at First Avenue and Broadalbin Street called for sidewalk dining on Broadalbin Street. The CARA Advisory Board decided to expand the pilot project from a quarter-block to a

full block for logistical reasons. The project is also being completed in cooperation with the Public Works Department, which will be replacing a waterline in this portion of the street at the same time, resulting in significant time and cost savings.

City staff worked with members of the Albany Downtown Association, Landmarks Advisory Commission, and building and business owners to refine the plan, designed by George Crandall. Crandall Arambula is the Portland architectural firm that put together Albany's Town Center Plan in

1995. That plan includes the "Broadalbin Promenade" with pedestrian features, like those in the pilot project, to run from the Linn County Courthouse to the Willamette River. The Broadalbin Promenade is designed to be the main north-south pedestrian connector between the riverfront, downtown, and the government center of Albany.

For more information about the Broadalbin Promenade, contact Kate Porsche, Urban Renewal Manager, at 541-497-6228.

## Linn County Revamps Multi-Agency Investigation Team

Imagine yourself out for a walk or a drive on a warm summer evening when you come upon an unexpected event. Police cars and fire trucks are parked everywhere with lights flashing and blocking the street. You can't drive or walk through the area because of a car crash.

You just can't tear your eyes away. Police officers are walking around, looking at the chaos. Some of those might be Albany Police Officers, Oregon State Police Troopers, Linn County Sheriff Deputies, Lebanon Police Officers, or Sweet Home Police Officers. These officers, deputies and troopers make up the Linn County MAIT (Multi-Agency Investigation Team), formerly called MAAIT (Multi-Agency Accident Investigation Team).

A surveyor is on scene with a total station setup and someone walking around holding a prism staff. A strange sight at a crash? The investigators are putting together all the evidence at the scene to determine the cause of the crash.



MAIT members survey an accident scene at Waverly Drive and 14th Avenue SE



Firefighters assist MAIT members preparing to survey an accident scene by blocking Santiam Highway

The Albany Police Department contributes three crash reconstructionists to the MAIT; they have special skills in pedestrian- or bicycle-related crashes, motorcycle crashes and crime scene reconstruction. These members have the skills to draw diagrams to scale of scenes as well as make three-dimensional renditions and animations of what happened.

So, if you happen upon the unexpected and are inconvenienced by having to walk or drive around the area, please know that the investigators there are making an expeditious effort to get the street opened up. The MAIT team has a desire to do a thorough job to ensure the safety of the citizens of Albany and Linn County.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding. If you have any questions regarding the Linn County MAIT team, please contact Corporal Jerry Drum at the Albany Police Department at 541-917-7680 or e-mail [jerry.drum@cityofalbany.net](mailto:jerry.drum@cityofalbany.net).

## Responding to Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is abuse. It involves injuring someone, usually a spouse or partner, and could include a parent, child, or other family member. It is a serious problem that comes in many forms including physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse, and stalking. Each year, 18 people in Oregon die as a result of intimate partner violence.

In 2008, the Albany Police Department responded to nearly 350 incidents of domestic violence. When Albany Police respond to a report of domestic violence, officers investigate to determine if an assault has occurred and, if so, to arrest the perpetrator. Arrest is mandatory in Oregon in cases of domestic violence.

The Police Department also helps to ensure that the victim gets the help he or she needs, such as contacting a domestic violence advocate provided by the nonprofit Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV). CARDV provides information about obtaining restraining orders and, where children are involved, contacting the state Department of Human Services.

Domestic violence calls are unpredictable and among the most dangerous calls to which police officers respond. Nationwide, this year alone, ten police officers have been killed responding to domestic violence calls. That is why Albany Police always send at least two officers to each of these calls.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone. During the past five years, one in ten Oregon women has experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. No one deserves to be abused, and help is available. If you or someone you know is being abused, contact the Albany Police Department or call the CARDV 24-hour hotline at 1-800-927-0197.

## APD Explorers Earn 6 Prizes in Annual Challenge

Albany Police Department Explorers brought home six awards from in the 30th annual Law Enforcement Challenge August 6-9, 2009, at the Chemawa Indian School in Salem.

The Law Enforcement Challenge involves Oregon and Washington police Cadet and Explorer posts, competing in an array of police-related scenarios and activities. The activities simulate the types of calls and situations that law enforcement personnel will face in the normal course of their duties. Fifteen agencies in Oregon and Washington brought 127 participants to this year's Challenge.

The APD Explorer Program was established to educate and involve youth in police operations and to pique their interest in law enforcement functions, whether they choose to pursue a law enforcement career or not. Through their involvement, Explorers establish an awareness of the complexities of police

service through the opportunity to observe police officers in action. The Explorers attend regular meetings and trainings at the Albany Police Department. Explorers also strive to create a better community in numerous ways including vacation house checks, directing traffic, patrol ride-a-longs, and community events.

For more information about the Explorer Program, call 541-917-7680.

Brooks Spangler, Nick Herrera, Tony DeRueda, Eric Tress, Andrew Borges, and Nathan Vigna participated as APD Explorers. Here is a list of the awards they won:

- Team, third place, Active Shooter competition.
- Tress and Borges, second place, Mystery Event.
- Borges and Vigna, third place, Two-Person, High-Risk Traffic Stop.
- DeRueda, first place in ORPAT, a rigorous physical agility test.
- Herrera, third place, Crime Scene Investigation.
- Team, second place, overall team standings.



# Preparing for the Next Flood

Albany was settled near the confluence of the Calapooia and Willamette Rivers. Upstream, the Willamette River watershed drains approximately 4,840 square miles of mostly mountainous timberland. Development in the watershed can increase the magnitude and frequency of flooding. As fields and forests are replaced by “imperious surfaces” (such as pavement and buildings), the development changes the way the water is stored and how it moves through the watershed.

## Causes of Flooding in Albany

Albany is subject to two types of flooding:

- **Riverine flooding** is the overbank flooding of rivers and streams. In Albany, those include the Willamette and Calapooia Rivers; Oak, Periwinkle, Cox, Burkhart, and Truax Creeks; and the Santiam-Albany Canal.
- **Urban flooding** results from an unusual and rapid accumulation of storm water that temporarily exceeds the capacity of the local storm water drainage system.

Flooding of streams and rivers in Albany generally results from large winter storms from the Pacific Ocean. When heavy rain-fall comes at the same time as snow-melt runoff, winter storms can result in simultaneous flooding on all rivers and streams in an affected area. Historically, most major floods in Albany have occurred in December, January, and February, although flooding in other months is possible.

## Past Floods

Flood records for the City of Albany indicate no regular pattern in which floods occur. Heavy rains that saturate the ground and fill rivers and creeks coupled with warming weather that melts heavy mountain snow created the major flooding that Albany has seen over the last 150 years. The last major flooding since the dams were built on rivers upstream took place in 1964 and 1996.

The February 1996 flood was the highest in recent memory but was considered less than a “100-year flood,” which means that it has a one in 100 (1%) chance of happening any given year. The record flood of 1861 had almost three times the volume of water in the Willamette River as measured at the Albany gauge. The 1964 flood would have rivaled the 1861 flood without the dams.

If you are in the floodplain, odds are that someday your property will be damaged. Even if you don’t live in a floodplain, knowing what to do (and not to do) in a flood can be life-saving.



## Flood Insurance

Flood insurance protects you from the financial devastation caused by floods. If you don’t have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Even a few inches of water can bring thousands of dollars in repair and restoration costs. Standard homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage, and disaster relief funds cover only a small portion of flood damage.



## Flood Safety Tips

- **Do not walk through flowing water.** Drowning is the leading cause of flood deaths, mostly during flash floods. Currents can be deceptive; six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still in front of you.
- **Do not drive through a flooded area.** More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Don’t drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out.
- **Stay away from power lines and electrical wires.** The number two flood killer is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to your electric utility (Pacific Power or Consumers Power) or the county Emergency Management Office.
- **Shut off gas and electricity and move valuable contents upstairs.** Be prepared in advance with a detailed checklist because warning of an impending flood may provide

little time for preparation prior to evacuation.

- **Look out for animals.** Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours.
- **Look before you step.** After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.
- **Be alert for gas leaks.** Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don’t smoke or use candles, lanterns or open flames unless you know that the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated. And don’t turn the gas back on yourself; call Northwest Natural to do it.



Even if you don’t carry a mortgage, you should still have flood insurance. If you rent, your landlord is responsible for the structure but not your belongings. You can purchase a separate flood insurance policy because Albany participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The premiums are discounted because Albany also participates in FEMA’s Community Rating System program, which requires floodplain management activities above and beyond minimum NFIP standards.

Coverage applies whether flooding results from heavy or prolonged rains, snow melt, blocked storm drainage systems, levee dam failure, or other causes. To be considered a flood, the waters must cover at least two acres or affect at least two properties.

Flood insurance is available for properties within and outside of floodplains. Your property’s flood risk is shown on flood hazard maps. Different types of policies are available depending on your flood risk:

- **If you live in a high-risk area, you will need a Standard Policy.** Most mortgage lenders will require that you have such a policy before they will approve your loan, including refinancing.
- **Outside of high-risk areas, flood insurance is also available, usually at lower cost.** A Preferred Risk Policy covers both a home and its contents. While you aren’t federally required to have flood insurance in a low-to-moderate risk area, it doesn’t mean you won’t ever need it. Large floods often extend beyond the boundaries of high-risk areas and smaller floods occur outside high-risk areas as well. In fact, about

25% of all flood insurance claims come from low-to-moderate risk areas.

FEMA has the latest information about flood insurance policies and premiums at <http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart>. FEMA’s “Answers to Questions about the National Flood Insurance Program” is at <http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/qanda.shtm>.

## Floodplain Function and Regulation

Maintaining the flow capacity of rivers and streams requires cooperation and assistance to prevent flooding and bank erosion. Here are some suggestions and information for understanding how floodplains function and how the City regulates the floodplain to protect property and lives while affording residents the ability to obtain flood insurance:

- **Do not dump or throw anything in ditches, creeks, or drains:** plugged channels cannot carry water; and when it rains, the excess water must go somewhere. Trash and vegetation dumped into drainageways degrades water quality and contributes to flooding. Dumping is a violation of the Albany Municipal Code. Even grass clippings and branches can accumulate and plug storm drains and channels. If you see dumping or debris in ditches, creeks, or drains, contact the Public Works Department at 917-7600.
- **Obtain a fill permit and/or building permit, if required:** always check with the Building Division (917-7553) before you build on or alter your property and check with the Public Works Department (917-7676) before you

grade or place fill on your property.

A permit may be needed to ensure that projects do not cause problems on other properties. If you see construction work without a building permit posted, contact the Building Division at 917-7553.

- **Recognize the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains:** flooding in streams is a natural process. Understanding and protecting the natural functions of floodplains helps reduce flood damage and protect resources. Vegetation serves as a natural filter, trapping sediments and capturing pollutants; it also anchors stream banks, reducing bank erosion and providing shade, which helps reduce water temperatures. Removing vegetation near a watercourse may be a violation of the Albany Municipal Code.
- **Reduce risk of damage:** practical and cost-effective methods for reducing or eliminating the risk of flooding are available. Techniques include preparing a household evacuation plan; elevation of the home; relocating the home to higher ground; constructing floodwalls or berms; flood-proofing the structure; having a licensed electrician protect utilities and electrical components; having a licensed plumber install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters from entering drains, toilets, and other sewer connections; and storing important documents and other irreplaceable items where they are unlikely to be damaged.

- **City floodplain information services:** flood maps and flood protection references are available at the Albany Public Library, on the City’s Web site, and at the Community Development Department on the second floor of City Hall. If you live in the city limits and find that your property is located within a floodplain, Community Development staff can provide information such as a FEMA elevation certificate, if one is available for your property. They can also help you estimate the risk of flooding to your home; find ways to reduce or prevent flood damage to your property; make site visits to review flood, drainage, and sewer problems; or provide tips on how to select a contractor. For more information, check the City’s Web site [www.cityofalbany.net/comdev/floodplain](http://www.cityofalbany.net/comdev/floodplain).

FEMA’s “Homeowner’s Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect Your House from Flooding” is on FEMA’s Web site at <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/pubs/lib312.shtm>.

## Flood Warning System

A warning of potential flooding is conveyed to the community through the Emergency Alert System. Regular programming on radio and television will be interrupted to describe the nature of the flooding, the locations likely to be affected, and what protective action citizens in the area should take. Emergency services personnel will also conduct door-to-door notification when flooding is imminent. You should heed these warnings and take appropriate action to safeguard your life and property.

