

The Atlantic Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30. However, a hurricane can form outside of those dates. Historically, fall is the most active part of hurricane season. August and September are usually the busiest months for hurricanes along North Carolina's coast. Our proximity to the Atlantic coast, combined with the low elevation above sea level for large parts of our town, make River Bend vulnerable to impacts from Hurricanes. A tropical system does not need to develop into a hurricane to cause damage in River Bend, particularly in the flood zone.

Because of these facts, if you live in River Bend, you should consider purchasing flood insurance. You can obtain a policy from a local agent, through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The Town of River Bend is a participant in the Community Rating System (CRS) of the NFIP. In short, that means that the town maintains records and files on flood zone properties, has and enforces a local flood damage prevention ordinance and meets other annual minimums to be a CRS town. Our CRS status means that River Bend residents who live in a special flood hazard area (SFHA) are eligible for a 10% discount on annual flood insurance policy premiums.

Our records indicate that 503 homes in River Bend were flooded during Hurricane Florence. According to data from the NFIP, just before Hurricane Florence made landfall, there were 443 flood insurance policies in effect in River Bend. That means there were at least 60 flooded homes that did not have flood insurance. Of the insured homes, cumulatively, those policies had total annual premiums of \$342,200 and were insured for a total \$107,660,200. On average, each policy owner paid \$772 in annual premium and was insured for \$243,000. After Hurricane Florence, 370 claims were made on those 443 policies, which is an 85% claims rate. To date, those claims have paid \$37,092,325 to the policy owners. On average, each policy owner with a claim received \$100,250 from their flood insurance policy. These facts show that having flood insurance can be very beneficial. Typically, regular home owners insurance does not cover damages from rising waters (flooding). If you are uncertain about your insurance coverage, you should contact your agent now. Do not wait until after the storm to learn that you are not covered.

It is true that flood insurance is like most other types of insurance, in that there may be many years that you pay the premium and never have a claim. Based on the figures above, the average claim in River Bend after Hurricane Florence paid for 129 years' worth of the average premium costs. Also, it is important to note that being located outside of a SFHA on the map does not mean that your home is safe from flooding. It just means that the risk is lower. On a personal note, my home is not located in a SFHA, but I maintain flood insurance. I have \$250,000 of coverage, and my annual premium is less than \$600. I strongly encourage every River Bend resident to consider purchasing flood insurance, especially those who live in a flood zone. Flood insurance typically does not go into effect until 30 days after it is purchased. If you wait until a hurricane is projected to impact River Bend, like Dorian recently was, it may be too late.