



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Sandbag Policy

This document details Wokingham Borough Council's Policy with regards to the deployment of sandbags to prevent or contain flooding. The responsibility for protecting property from the risk of flooding rests with the property owner. There is no statutory requirement for the council to provide sandbags, although there is a broad expectation in the mind of the general public that, in a period of flooding, the local council will make sandbags available. This Policy identifies that the council is not able to act to all requests for sandbags during a flood event but does identify its priorities.

1. Deployment of sandbags

- 1.1. The deployment of sandbags will be prioritised in the following order:
- a. maintaining access for the emergency services,
 - b. protecting vital facilities, assets and infrastructure,
 - c. protecting the most vulnerable,
 - d. protection of WBC business property and assets where deemed appropriate,
 - e. protection of residential property.

The decision to deploy sandbags will be made by:

- a) Highways and Flooding & Drainage teams in their normal course of duties will deploy them as they see a need within the priorities above or at the request of the emergency services.
- b) Emergency Response Team Duty Officers or the Emergency Planning Team will authorise work orders for the deployments during emergency response, assessed in accordance with the priorities above.

- 1.2. Where sandbags are provided the following conditions apply:
- No guarantee can be given that sandbags will be delivered within a specific timescale.
 - The council will not accept responsibility for the quality or effectiveness of sandbags provided by the council.
 - All requests and locations for sandbag deployment will be assessed in terms of the health and safety of the crews making deliveries and the availability of personnel to produce and deliver sandbags.
 - Members of the public will not be allowed to collect sandbags from the council's depot.
 - WBC will supply sandbags free of charge on a needs basis. However, once issued the sandbags are deemed to become the property and responsibility of the householder or receiving organisation.
 - WBC will not accept responsibility for the collection and disposal of sandbags after an event, although exceptions will be considered where householders are considered vulnerable.
 - Where sandbags are provided, WBC will not accept liability for the positioning of them or any subsequent repositioning.
 - Sandbags will not be provided to residents to protect any buildings or land other than residential properties.

- 1.3. The council will encourage people to make their own enquiries for sandbags in advance of a flood event by contacting local suppliers such as builders' merchants where they can purchase them and/or possibly have them delivered. The council will continue to support and encourage householders and businesses to develop flood action plans to prepare in advance of flood emergencies and flood warnings.
- 1.4. Sandbags that have come into contact with flood water must be disposed of, as they will be contaminated and are hazardous to health. Keep them away from children or pets. Always wear gloves when handling and disposing of used sandbags, and [wash your hands thoroughly](#) in warm soapy water afterwards. Disposal should be via the 'non-recyclable waste' section at a [local recycling centre](#), not as usual household waste.

2. Sandbag Storage Locations

- 2.1. WBC will maintain a stock of sandbags which will be stored by its Highways contractor. The contract between Wokingham Borough Council and its Highways contractor states that:

The following materials will be available for emergency use within the required response time 24 hours per day, 7 days per week:

- (a) 1000 No. Rotproof Sandbags (full of building sand)
- (b) 3000 No. Rotproof Sandbags (empty)

3. Contact details

Requests for sandbags should be made by calling Wokingham Borough Council Highways department 0118 974 6000 during working hours or 0800 212 111 out of hours (including weekends and Bank Holidays).

4. Useful links to prepare for flooding

- For information on how to prepare yourself or business for flooding or other risks [Preparing for an emergency - What to do! \(thamesvalleylrf.org.uk\)](https://www.thamesvalleylrf.org.uk)
- For information on how to better protect your property from flooding: [Protecting your property – National Flood Forum](#)
- Links to inform utility providers if you are vulnerable [Priority services \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk)
- Visit the GOV.UK Prepare site for information on how to be prepared for flooding <https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/be-informed-about-hazards/flooding/>