

LOOK UPSTREAM

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Living safely in Harris County requires everyone to become knowledgeable of the risks; what, where and when the risks are there; What to be aware of and what not to do. Most of us are aware of flood dangers but many of us do not realize the danger of drowning in a flooded car or heeding the risk of driving into water up to or above the axel of a typical family automobile.

Hurricane season began June 1st and with it the annual cycle of torrential rainfalls pushing in with storm fronts arriving from the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, which flood streets and roads, parking lots, uncovered drainage ditches, and roadway underpasses. It is not surprising that people are found drowned in their automobiles

which stalled in high water after the driver failed to take the precaution of not driving into an underpass in the process of it becoming flooded.

Nearly half of all flash flood fatalities are automobile related. Water weighs 62.4 lbs per cubic foot and typically flows downstream at 6 to 12 miles per hour. When a vehicle stalls in water, the momentum of the moving water transfers to the car. For each foot of depth, 500 lbs of lateral force is pushing against the car.

The biggest factor is buoyancy which causes the car to effectively become 1,500 lbs lighter for each foot the water rises. Two feet of water will carry away most automobiles. We recommend all family members of driving age be made aware of this information. It may save a life.

Look Upstream articles are provided by the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition, a 501(c)(3) organization, as a public service. Visit their website, www.ccfcc.org for more information on flood insurance, protection planning, issues and membership.

