

“Tom saw some water on the road, but he thought it wasn’t deep. And, after all, he was in a truck, high up off the ground.”

Tom and Marilyn (last name withheld by request) during Tropical Storm Allison, June 2001



For more information about Turn Around, Don't Drown:
www.srh.weather.gov

For more information about FLASH:
www.flash.org

National Weather Service
Southern Region Headquarters
819 Taylor Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102



When tempted, remember

**TURN AROUND
DON'T DROWN™**



The Problem

Tom was fortunate. He was rescued and lived to tell his tale. But others did not fare as well. A man in Pennsylvania, who refused to abandon his home during an evacuation, was later swept away as he attempted to leave in his automobile.

Trying to prove a water crossing was safe enough to drive through, an Arlington, Texas man lost his life as he attempted to wade to the other side.

These tragic events happen too often. Ironically, many drivers rescued from flood waters reported they were in a hurry to reach the safety of their home as a reason for attempting to ford a flooded road.

Automobile commercials advertising the ability of their product to tread water can lead to a false sense of security or even to tragic consequences.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports more than half of all flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is *driven into* hazardous flood waters. The next highest percentage of flood-related deaths are due to *walking into* or near flood waters.

The Reason

Where does this idea that “my heavy vehicle will keep me safe” come from? It comes from the false trust in the weight of the vehicle you are driving.

Many believe their 3,000 to 5,000 pound vehicle will remain in contact with the road surface...that it is too heavy to float. Think about that for a minute. Aircraft carriers float don't they?

Vehicles (and ships) float because of buoyancy. In fact, most cars can be swept away in 18-24 inches of moving water. Trucks and SUVs are not much better with only an additional six to twelve inches of clearance.

In moving water, all that is needed is for a vehicle to become buoyant *enough* allowing the water's force to push it sideways, even while the wheels remain in contact with the pavement.

Once swept downstream, a vehicle will often roll to one side or perhaps flip over entirely. The driver then has only a few seconds to escape. Many drivers panic as soon as the vehicle submerges and are found later with their seat belt intact.

The Solution

The solution is simple. **TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN™**. Stay out of the flooded roadway. The water may be much deeper than it appears as the road beds may be washed out. Also, respect “road closed” barriers posted to warn you of the danger.

This includes attempts to walk or wade through flowing water. As little as six inches of rapidly moving water can sweep you off your feet and carry you downstream.

If there is a low water crossing between you and your home or your home and your destination, think about your family before attempting to cross it. Let caution, good sense, your personal safety and your family's well being be your guides. **TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN™**.

Finally, know when you are at risk! Keep abreast of the latest weather watches and warnings from the National Weather Service with the NOAA Weather and All Hazards Radio or through a local news source.

For more information, visit the **TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN™** website at: www.srh.weather.gov.

