

2026 FLOOD GUIDE FOR LAGOS STATE

EDITORIAL NOTE

Every year, flooding reshapes life across Nigeria — flooding farmlands, endangering agricultural yield, displacing communities, closing schools, and cutting off roads. The Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) has mapped what 2026 will look like, and the picture is clear: with the right preparation, communities can absorb what is coming without catastrophe. We know this because 2025 proved it. Early warning and organised community action reduced flood fatalities by 76% and displaced persons by 84% compared to 2024 (ref). The goal for 2026 is to go further.

The flood year follows a predictable rhythm, and that predictability is a gift. The early rains of April through June give communities a window to act — clearing drainage channels, reinforcing riverbanks, and registering households for alerts — before the peak season intensifies in July, August, and September. By the time October and November arrive, the heaviest rains may have eased, but water that fell months earlier in Adamawa and Cameroon is still travelling downstream toward the delta states. Communities in Anambra, Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers need to stay vigilant well into November, long after they might assume the danger has passed.

The Communities That Need the Most Support:

Ten states face the sharpest risk in 2026: Kogi, Niger, Delta, Anambra, Benue, Kebbi, Rivers, Bayelsa, Adamawa, and Cross River but the threat is not abstract. Across Nigeria, 30,707 communities are at risk, along with 4,792 health facilities and 10,684 schools. When a health centre floods, patients lose access to care. When a school fills with water, children lose months of learning. These are the human costs that preparation can prevent.

In Kogi, where the Niger and Benue rivers meet at Lokoja, riverine flooding can isolate entire communities for weeks. Local governments there should be identifying high ground now,

designating safe assembly points, and making sure every community has a marked escape route. In Benue, the low-lying areas around Makurdi need the same attention before the Benue River crests. In Port Harcourt and other urban settings, where poor urban drainage compounds river and tidal flooding, the single most impactful community action is also the simplest — keeping drains clear of refuse.

With 4.2 million hectares of farmland at risk, agriculture sits at the centre of the 2026 challenge. Planting early-maturing crop varieties and using ridges or mounds instead of flat planting beds reduces both waterlogging damage and the risk of a total harvest loss. Staggered planting — sowing in batches rather than all at once means that if one batch is hit by flooding, others survive. Harvesting before October, and storing produce in elevated spaces away from floodwater, protects what has already been grown.

For northern farming communities, the challenge runs deeper, because the flood season is immediately followed by a severe dry period from December through February. The practical response is to treat flood season not only as a threat but as an opportunity — storing water in tanks, drums, and ponds during the wet months to carry livestock and households through the drought that follows.

The infrastructure of flood resilience is not complicated. It is community flood wardens who know which households have elderly or disabled residents and can reach them first. It is local radio stations broadcasting NIHSA alerts in local languages so that fishermen and farmers in remote areas receive warnings in time to act. It is traditional rulers and community leaders who have identified, in advance, which road out of the community stays passable longest. It is households that keep a small emergency kit — water purification tablets, key documents, basic medicine — packed and accessible before the rains arrive.

None of this requires waiting for government. Communities that prepare themselves reduce their own losses and make it easier for relief to reach those who need it most when flooding does occur.

Where local government is active and well-coordinated, the difference in outcomes is measurable. The priorities for 2026 are straightforward: clear primary drainage channels before April, pre-position food and medical supplies in high-risk areas before July, and ensure that development permits are not issued for floodplain land. These are not expensive interventions. They are largely organisational — a matter of doing in advance what would otherwise be done in crisis.

Nigeria has 30,707 communities, 10,684 schools, and 4,792 health facilities in the path of the 2026 flood season. Each one is also a community that has survived flooding before, that has knowledge of its own landscape, and that can act. The science has been done. The warnings have been issued. What happens next depends on what communities, local governments, and individuals choose to do with this information — starting now, while there is still time.

Source: Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) 2026 Annual Flood Outlook

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN LAGOS IN 2026

Lagos State is one of the most flood-vulnerable states in all of Nigeria. In fact, Lagos is the **number one urban flood hotspot** in the entire country. The government has listed Lagos among the **Top 10 States at High Risk** for flooding in 2026.

Why is Lagos so uniquely vulnerable? Three critical reasons:

First, Lagos is a coastal city built on low-lying terrain. Much of Lagos sits just above sea level. Some areas are below sea level. When water comes — from the ocean, from lagoons, or from rain — it has nowhere to go.

Second, Lagos faces THREE types of flooding. The AFO identifies Lagos as having **urban drainage failure, blocked waterways, and coastal surge**. Very few places have all three.

Third, Lagos has a massive population and poor drainage infrastructure. The city has grown faster than its drains. Many drainage channels are blocked with plastic and garbage. Natural waterways have been built over.

The Three Flood Periods for Lagos:

When?	What to Expect	How Serious?
April, May, June (Early rains)	Rains intensify. Urban areas with blocked drains see flash floods. Low-lying coastal areas may see tidal flooding.	Low to Medium
July, August, September (Peak rainy season)	This is very dangerous. Heavy rains overwhelm drainage systems. Water pools on roads and enters homes. Coastal surges push ocean water inland.	Medium to High
October, November (Late flooding)	Flooding continues. Recession flooding and coastal surges still pose risks.	Medium to High

THE URBAN FLOOD HOTSPOT: LAGOS (NUMBER ONE IN NIGERIA)

The AFO lists Lagos as the **number one** Urban Flood Hotspot in Nigeria.

Rank	State	Specific Location	Main Flood Cause	Risk Level
1	Lagos	Lagos metropolitan area	Urban drainage failure; blocked waterways; coastal surge	Medium to High

What this means for Lagos:

- **Urban drainage failure:** The drainage system is overwhelmed. Drains are blocked with garbage. Many drains do not exist in newly built areas.
- **Blocked waterways:** Natural streams and canals have been blocked by construction and garbage. Water cannot flow to the lagoon or ocean.
- **Coastal surge:** The Atlantic Ocean pushes water inland during high tides and storms.

If you live in Lagos, you must take flooding seriously in 2026. This is the most flood-prone urban area in Nigeria.

WHICH PARTS OF LAGOS ARE AT RISK

Lagos State falls within **Hydrological Area VI (Western Littoral)**. This means Lagos is in the same flood zone as Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Edo, Delta, Kogi, and Kwara.

By the numbers (from NIHSA for HA-VI):

Season	Risk Level	Number of Communities (across HA-VI which includes Lagos)	What This Means for Lagos
AMJ (April-May-June)	High	849 communities (for Delta, Edo, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Osun combined)	Early flooding begins. Urban areas with blocked drains see flash floods.
JAS (July-August-September)	High	1,195 communities (for Delta, Edo, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo combined)	This is peak flooding. Widespread urban flooding across the metropolis.
ON (October-November)	High	1,024 communities (for Delta, Edo, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo combined)	Late flooding continues. Coastal surges remain a risk.

Annual total for Lagos: Lagos is among the **Top 10 High Risk States** in Nigeria. Hundreds of communities across the state will see flooding in 2026.

For roads: Lagos has **377 road sections** identified as at risk of flooding in 2026 (Table 4.26 of the AFO). This is the **highest in Nigeria** by a very wide margin (Kaduna is second with 132).

THE THREE TYPES OF FLOODING IN LAGOS

Type 1: Urban Drainage Failure (Flash Flooding)

This happens when heavy rain falls on a city with blocked or inadequate drains.

What causes it in Lagos:

- Drains blocked with plastic bottles, sachets, sand, and garbage
- No drains in many new neighborhoods
- Drains that are too small for the amount of rain

What happens: Water pools on roads. It enters homes and businesses. Traffic stops. The water may be only a few inches deep, but it causes major disruption.

Type 2: Blocked Waterways (River/Canal Flooding)

Lagos has many natural streams and man-made canals that carry water to the lagoon and ocean.

What causes it in Lagos:

- People build houses on top of stream channels
- Garbage blocks canals
- The channels have not been cleaned in years

What happens: Water backs up behind blockages. It spreads into neighborhoods that were not built to handle flooding. The water can be deep and dangerous.

Type 3: Coastal Surge (Ocean Flooding)

The Atlantic Ocean pushes water onto land.

What causes it in Lagos:

- High tides (especially "spring tides")
- Strong winds blowing from the ocean toward the land
- Sea level rise (a long-term problem)

What happens: Water rises from the ocean side, not from rain. Coastal communities like Victoria Island, Lekki, and Badagry are most at risk. This can happen even on a sunny day.

WHAT THE AFO SAYS ABOUT LAGOS

The AFO provides specific warnings for Lagos:

"Lagos and its metropolitan area appear as a distinct high-risk zone in the south-west, driven by the combination of low coastal elevation, high impervious surface cover, and severely overwhelmed drainage infrastructure."

What this means in simple words:

- **Low coastal elevation:** Lagos is very flat and low. Water does not drain away easily.
- **High impervious surface cover:** Concrete and asphalt cover most of the city. Rain cannot soak into the ground. It has to go into drains, which are blocked.
- **Severely overwhelmed drainage infrastructure:** The drains are not big enough, not clean enough, and not everywhere they need to be.

The AFO also notes that the PRESAGG 2026 forecast predicts **above-normal river flows** for coastal basins. This means more water than usual in the lagoon and coastal waters.

KNOWN FLOOD-PRONE AREAS IN LAGOS

Based on the AFO's risk assessment and historical records, these areas are at highest risk:

Area	Main Flood Cause	Risk Level
Lagos Island	Coastal surge, blocked drainage	High
Victoria Island	Coastal surge, blocked drainage	High
Ikoyi	Coastal surge, blocked drainage	High
Lekki	Coastal surge, blocked drainage, rapid development	High
Ajah	Coastal surge, blocked drainage	High
Badagry	Coastal surge, low elevation	High
Apapa	Coastal surge, blocked drainage	High
Mushin	Blocked drainage, flash flooding	Medium to High
Agege	Blocked drainage, flash flooding	Medium to High
Alimosho	Blocked drainage, flash flooding	Medium to High

Area	Main Flood Cause	Risk Level
Oshodi	Blocked drainage, flash flooding	Medium to High
Ikeja	Blocked drainage, flash flooding (especially around Computer Village)	Medium to High
Surulere	Blocked drainage	Medium
Yaba	Blocked drainage	Medium
Mainland areas	Blocked drainage	Medium

WHEN IS THE WORST TIME FOR LAGOS?

The **JAS period (July, August, September)** is the most dangerous for Lagos. This is when:

- Heavy monsoon rains fall
- Drainage systems are overwhelmed
- Flash floods happen
- Coastal surges can coincide with high tides

But the **ON period (October, November)** also carries risk, especially from coastal surges and recession flooding.

Special warning for Lagos: Flooding can happen any time there is heavy rain, even outside the main flood season. A one-hour downpour in March can flood roads and homes if drains are blocked.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT BLOCKED DRAINS (THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE)

The AFO specifically mentions "blocked waterways" as a major cause of flooding in Lagos. This is something YOU can help fix.

What causes blocked drains in Lagos:

- Plastic bottles and sachets thrown into drains
- Sand from construction
- Garbage dumped in canals
- Vegetation growing in drains



What you can do:

Action	Why It Matters
Do not throw garbage into drains	This is the single most important thing you can do
Clear the drain in front of your home	Even one blocked drain can flood a whole street
Report blocked drains to the local government	They have equipment to clear large blockages
Do not build on top of drainage channels	This blocks water permanently
Encourage your neighbors to do the same	One person cannot solve the problem alone

WHAT TO DO DURING THE AUGUST DRY SPELL

Lagos may experience a reduction in rainfall around August (the "August Break").

What to do during the August dry spell:

- This is a good time to clear drains before the September rains return
- If you have a garden, be prepared to water plants
- Do not assume the dry spell means the flood season is over

THE ROAD DISRUPTION WARNING

Lagos has **377 road sections** at risk of flooding in 2026. This is the **highest in Nigeria** (Kaduna is second with 132).

What this means:

- Many roads will become impassable during heavy rain
- Traffic will be severely disrupted
- You may be stranded for hours
- Emergency services may not reach you quickly
- The Third Mainland Bridge, Lekki-Ikoyi Link Bridge, and other major roads may be affected

What you should do:

- **Do not drive through flooded roads.** Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. One foot can sweep away a car.
 - Stay informed. Listen to traffic reports and NIHSA/NEMA warnings.
 - If you see water on the road ahead, turn back or find another route.
 - Keep an emergency kit in your car (water, snacks, first aid, phone charger).
 - Plan alternative routes before the rainy season starts.
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WHAT RESIDENTS OF LAGOS MUST DO

For all households:

Action	When to Do It	Why
Clear the drain in front of your home	Before April and regularly during rainy season	Prevents water from pooling on your street
Do not throw garbage into drains	Always	This is the number one cause of flooding
Know the nearest high ground	Before the rains start	Where will you go if water enters your home?
Raise important belongings	Before the rains start	Keep electronics, documents, and valuables above flood level
Prepare sandbags	Before the rains start	Use them to block water from entering your door
Get flood insurance (if possible)	Before the rainy season	Helps you recover after a flood

For business owners:

- Keep important records and inventory on upper floors or high shelves
- Have a plan to move goods to higher ground quickly
- Consider flood insurance
- Backup digital records to the cloud

For drivers:

- **Do not drive through floodwater.** Turn around, don't drown.
 - Keep your phone charged and have emergency numbers saved
 - Know alternative routes to avoid flooded roads
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THE GOOD NEWS FOR LAGOS

Unlike northern states, Lagos does not face severe drought during the dry season.

Dry season outlook (October 2026 - March 2027):

Zone	Forecast	What This Means
South-West (including Lagos)	Normal to Slightly Wet (coastal areas remain wet)	You will have water throughout the dry season. No drought vulnerability.

This means you do not need to worry about water scarcity.

However, coastal surges can still happen during the dry season. High tides and strong winds can push ocean water onto land even when it is not raining.

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP IN LAGOS

Agency	What They Do	Contact
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Agency	What They Do	Contact
NIHSA	Issues flood warnings	0800-NIHSA-NG
NEMA	Disaster response and relief	0800-NEMA-NG
LASEMA (Lagos State Emergency Management Agency)	State-level emergency response	112 or 767 (toll-free)
Lagos State Drainage Office	Clears blocked drains	Contact your Local Government Chairman
NiMet	Weather forecasts	www.nimet.gov.ng

THE BOTTOM LINE FOR LAGOS

- **You are the number one urban flood hotspot in Nigeria.** Take this extremely seriously.
- **The worst months are July, August, and September (JAS).** But flooding can happen any time there is heavy rain.
- **You have THREE types of flooding:** Urban drainage failure (blocked drains), blocked waterways (canals and streams), and coastal surge (ocean flooding).
- **Blocked drains are the number one cause of flooding in Lagos.** Do not throw garbage into drains. Clear the drain in front of your home.
- **377 road sections in Lagos are at risk of flooding** — the highest in Nigeria. Do not drive through floodwater.

- **Coastal surge is a serious danger** for Victoria Island, Lekki, Ikoyi, Lagos Island, Apapa, and Badagry. Pay attention to tides and wind.
- **The AFO says Lagos has "severely overwhelmed drainage infrastructure."** The government needs to act, but you can also help by keeping drains clear.
- **The good news:** You do not face drought. Your dry season will have Normal to Slightly Wet conditions.
- **Do not wait until water arrives.** Prepare your emergency kit, know your escape route, keep drains clear, and never drive through floodwater.

This information comes directly from the **NIHSA 2026 Annual Flood Outlook**.

PREPARE NOW. DO NOT WAIT.

