

(Note: Below is the email we sent camper families in Summer 2025 following the devastating flooding in central Texas, which has been lightly edited with updated information for Summer 2026 and beyond.)

Subject: Answering Questions About Flood Protocols

Dear Camper Families,

I hope this email finds you and yours well, and that you're having a safe and fun summer and looking forward to coming to Glisson soon!

We're all continuing to grapple with the devastating flooding in central Texas affecting thousands, including multiple summer camps along the Guadalupe River, and Camp Mystic most tragically of all. Please keep all those affected in your prayers, and if you feel moved beyond prayer, consider giving to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's disaster response at: <https://umcmmission.org/umcor-us-latest-responses/>

While questions about flooding have never been among our FAQs, it only makes sense that this recent tragedy would spark curiosity or even outright concern about flooding for Glisson parents. We've heard from some of you directly, and we can easily imagine others have wondered or worried without asking. And so, we'd like to share with you Glisson's context in relation to potential flooding events, the precautions we take, and the response plans we have in-place.

As always, please know that the safety and well-being of our campers and staff is our highest priority. We plan and train extensively and, as a camp accredited by the American Camping Association (ACA), we adhere to ACA best practices for emergency preparedness for a wide variety of scenarios, including flooding.

As a camp based in a creek valley, it is only natural to wonder about flooding. We are well aware that Glisson has a potential hazard with Cane Creek running through camp, and so we take many precautions to treat it with respect. The bulleted info below starts with "What we know" then shifts to "What we do".

What We Know – Topography: Glisson is fortunate that the catchment area measured at the center of camp for Cane Creek is relatively small, a narrow 27 square kilometers, with only 9 miles of creek upstream from camp and almost all of it located in forestland with sandy loam soil type that absorbs water well. Simply put – by no doing of our own – our particular topographical context is naturally well-suited for weathering heavy rainfall without experiencing sudden, dangerous flooding events. Nevertheless, during a Flood Watch (we have had a few of these over the years during retreat season) we remain on high alert and are prepared to act quickly and proactively should conditions in the creek change.

What We Know – History: Five of our facilities – the Holland Building (gym) and four boys' cabins – are in the 100-year flood plain. That's been their location since their

predecessor cabins were built in the late 1940's. In the 19 years I've been at Glisson, we've had one rain event lasting several days, during winter, when the water rose high enough to affect those cabins; the cabins were unoccupied at the time, but would have been easily proactively evacuated due to the relatively slow rise of water level across multiple days of heavy rain. In those 19 years, I cannot recall a summer rain event significant enough for the creek to leave its banks. Even so, we approach Cane Creek with the respect that a "100-year flood" could occur during any season, and as such we take layered precautions, have response plans in-place, and train staff on scenarios and procedures so that we're as prepared as possible for a potential flooding event (see below).

What We Do – Monitoring: Five members of our year-round team monitor water levels all summer long when rain is forecast or in the area: our Director of Summer Camps, Director of Facilities, Village Program Director, Outpost Program Director, and myself. This monitoring includes closely tracking all National Weather Service alerts for our area, and taking precautions to continue receiving notifications until the inclement weather has passed. Our program directors monitor water levels constantly since we do creek hiking daily, tubing on the local Chestatee River multiple times a week, and have multiple groups on area rivers kayaking each week. Area rivers have USGS gauges for height and speed that are monitored and their data is available on apps we use such as Rivercast. While Cane Creek, which flows through Glisson, is not a large enough waterway to be monitored by the USGS, out of an abundance of caution, we have installed our own water level gauge that will directly alert multiple year-round team members if the water level gets within 2 feet of the creek's banks as an additional layer of our monitoring protocols.

What We Do – Response: There is reliable cell service in camp for communicating weather alerts and/or activating emergency protocols between our year-round team and our summer staff leadership team members who are trained to go directly to their assigned living groups in-person to initiate next steps. In the event of a cell service outage – and as one form of communication redundancy during an emergency – we use a centralized bell for emergency notification in addition to direct person-to-person communication. As an additional redundancy layer for severe weather, each cabin has a weather alert radio programmed for tornado warnings. We have multiple evacuation options available depending on the emergency and situation. In the event of flooding, our valley is narrow and affords very easy and rapid access to elevation above the floodplain. Depending on the severity of the weather event locally, should flooding occur, we would first evacuate boys cabins – our cabins in closest proximity to Cane Creek – to the nearby Moor Center ("the old dining hall"), which is at a higher elevation that is well outside of the floodplain. Girls cabins are at an elevation above the Moor Center, and Ivie Lodge (Sparrowwood program lodging) is also well above the floodplain. Should an event occur that required complete evacuation of camp, we would travel Camp Glisson Road and use Lumpkin County High School – adjacent to our property – as an evacuation gathering point and pickup center, and would travel over the ridge to the high school, should the road be impassable. We practice our emergency

procedures and evacuation procedures during staff training, and those include accounting for each camper whenever we're in an emergency situation.

What We Do – Outdoor Lodging: The previous bullet covers our typical lodging for our resident campus. Our Village campout sites are the highest elevations in camp, well out of the floodplain. Our concern for campers and staff at campout is severe weather rather than flood risk, and living groups might be removed from campsites to avoid extreme weather during a flood warning before they would be removed for actual flood risk. The same can be said for our adirondack sleeping shelters at our Outpost campus. When Outpost campers and staff are at campout onsite or at an offsite campsite, our program staff is closely tracking the weather in the group's area, relaying alerts and, as-needed, direction to adjust plans for weather safety. Across programs, all outdoor lodging sites remain in communication via phone/text, and in the event of an emergency, our staff visit campsites directly even as urgent text messages are going out.

What We Do – First Responders: Our local emergency services are nearby and very responsive to Glisson. We reach out to them each spring to let them know the weeks we'll have summer campers onsite and the number of campers we're expecting. And we've regularly hosted meals and training events for law enforcement and fire/rescue officers so that they know we're here and are familiar with the property and its buildings.

Please note that the list above is not meant to be an exhaustive sharing of our comprehensive emergency protocols, but rather a summary of our flood preparedness context, precautions, and response plans.

We hope that this information is helpful for you as a camper parent, and that it's abundantly clear that we couldn't be more serious about your camper's safety. We also hope it's clear that we care about your questions and concerns – because we want you to have a great Glisson experience, too. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Thank you for trusting Glisson as your partner in providing safe and faith-forming camp ministry experiences for your camper. We look forward to seeing you and your camper at Glisson soon!

Sincerely,
C. Russell Davis
Executive Director