
Flood Clean-Up Precautions in Lake County

PROTECT YOURSELF and AVOID ILLNESS

- Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before preparing or eating food, after using the toilet, after doing flood cleanup activities, and after touching items that have come into contact with floodwater or sewage. If you get a puncture wound or a wound that has come into contact with floodwater, feces, soil, or saliva, contact your doctor or the Lake County General Health District (LCGHD) to find out if you need a tetanus booster. If you do not know whether it is safe to eat or drink a food or beverage, throw it out. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Floodwater often has infectious organisms, including intestinal bacteria such as E. coli, Salmonella, and Shigella; Hepatitis A Virus; and agents of typhoid, paratyphoid and tetanus. Eating food or drinking water that is contaminated causes most cases of sickness associated with flooding.
- To avoid disease that comes from the floodwater, it is important to:
 - Wash your hands with soap and clean running water, especially before meals.
 - Be sure your tetanus shot is current (given within the last 10 years) **before** working in flooded areas.
 - You should see a doctor if you get a wound after being in a flood or from flood clean-up activities. A doctor may recommend that you get a tetanus booster.
 - Be very careful with hidden chemical and electric hazards, which can cause fires and explosions. Floods have the strength to move and/or bury hazardous waste and chemical containers far from their normal storage areas, creating a risk for people who come into contact with them.
 - The fire or police departments should handle any chemical hazards, such as a propane tank.
 - Parents need to help children avoid illness. Do not let children play in floodwater areas. Wash children's hands often and always before meals. Do not let children play with toys that have come into contact with floodwater and that have not been disinfected. You can disinfect toys using a solution of one cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water.

FOOD SAFETY

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with floodwater. Throw out any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with floodwater. Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you take off the can labels, thoroughly wash the cans, and then disinfect them with a solution of one cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water. Re-label your cans, including the expiration date, with a marker. Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, and home canned foods should be thrown out if they have come into contact with flood water because they cannot be disinfected. For infants, use only pre-prepared canned baby formula that requires no added water rather than powdered formulas prepared with treated water.

SAFETY TIPS

- If you have electricity and an electrician has said that it is safe to turn it on, use a “wet-dry” shop vacuum (or the vacuum function of a carpet steam cleaner), an electric-powered water transfer pump, or sump pump to get rid of standing water. If you are using equipment in wet areas, be sure to wear rubber boots. When working in hot areas, have plenty of drinking water available, use sunscreen, and take frequent breaks.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Be sure a first-aid kit is available to disinfect any cuts or abrasions. Protect open cuts and abrasions with waterproof gloves or dressings.
- Do NOT touch downed power lines or any object or water that is in contact with such lines. Treat all power lines as energized and dangerous until you are sure that the lines have been de-energized and are safe.
- Immediately leave any building that has a gas leak until the leak is controlled and the area is ventilated.
- Keep children and pets out of cleanup areas until cleanup has been completed.
- See a doctor right away if you become injured or ill.

CLEANUP INSIDE and OUTSIDE THE HOME

- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of an area.
- Throw out items that cannot be washed and disinfected, such as mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and most paper products.
- Walls, hard-surfaced floors, and many other household surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean them. For items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, air dry them in the sun and then spray them thoroughly with a disinfectant. Steam clean all carpeting. Throw out household materials that have come into contact with flood waters and that cannot be disinfected, such as wall coverings, cloth, and rugs.
- Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (such as flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, and other plumbing fixtures) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent.
- Help the drying process by using fans, air conditioning units, and dehumidifiers. Fans should be placed at a window or door to blow the air outwards rather than inwards, so that mold is not spread.
- After completing the cleanup, wash your hands with soap and water.
- Wash all clothes worn during the cleanup in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from clothes and linens that have not come into contact with flood waters. It is recommended that a laundromat be used for washing large amounts of clothes and linens until your onsite waste-water system has been professionally inspected and serviced.
- If weather permits, open windows and doors of the house to aid in the drying-out process.
- If the HVAC system was flooded with water, it may become contaminated with mold. Turning on the mold-contaminated HVAC will spread mold throughout the house. Professional cleaning will kill the mold and stop mold from coming back. When the service determines that your system is clean and if it is safe to do so, you can turn it on and use it to help remove excess moisture from your home.

OTHER HEALTH TIPS/PRECAUTIONS

- To help prevent injury when lifting objects soaked with flood water, use teams of two or more persons to move bulky objects. Avoid lifting any materials that weigh more than 50 pounds per person.
- If you have standing water in your home and can turn off the main power from a dry location, then go ahead and turn off the power, even if it delays cleaning. If you have to enter standing water to get to

the main power switch, call an electrician to turn it off. **NEVER** turn power on or off yourself or use an electric tool or appliance while standing in water.

WATER WELLS

Once flood waters have gone down, private water systems should be examined for any visible damage such as cracks or holes in water well casings or damaged cistern walls or lids. If there is visible damage, the homeowner should contact a professional water system contractor that is registered with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to arrange for repairs to the system.

If the private water system does not appear to have any damage to the system, the homeowner should then have the water system disinfected and tested for potability prior to reuse.

Disinfection procedures for water wells can be found in ODH's publication, Disinfection Fact Sheet for Flooded Wells, which can be found at www.lcghd.org

Once private water systems have been properly cleaned and disinfected, they need to be tested for drinkability.

Additional information can be found at:		
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	After a Hurricane or Flood: Cleanup of Flood Water	www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp
	Emergency Preparedness and Response – Floods	www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Flood Cleanup	www.epa.gov/iaq/flood/index.html
American Red Cross	Repairing Your Flooded Home	http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/file_cont333_lang0_150.pdf
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	After a Flood	http://www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/fl_after.shtm
Ohio Department of Health	Response Manual - Recovery after the Flood	http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/CC899ABC49C64DA19CC5F3E5E2A147FB/floodmanual.pdf

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