

Floodwaters may cause many problems for home and business owners, such as exposure to disease-causing organisms, structural damage to buildings, depositing dirt and debris, and damaging equipment, furnishings and other household or business concerns. Residential wells and on-site sewage systems may also be affected.

Preventive measures can be taken to reduce damage due to flooding. Remove furnishings, appliances, and carpet from the lower floors and basements. It is also important to have emergency supplies ready.

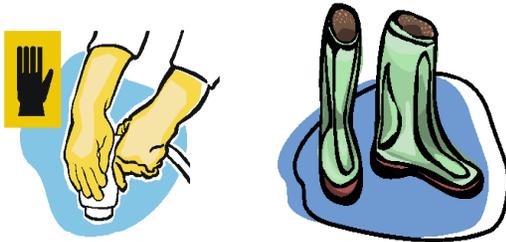
Emergency Preparedness

Store enough water to last through an emergency or about two weeks. You will need one gallon of water per day per person. This is the amount normally used for drinking, cooking and brushing of teeth. Commercially bottled water in tightly sealed containers may be stored for up to 6 months. Use or dispose of the stored water and replace with a fresh supply every six months.

You may also need to boil water during emergencies. To do this you will need equipment for boiling water. Keep in mind that your usual source of energy (electricity or gas) may not be available during an emergency.

Residential Flood Cleanup

To protect yourself from disease-causing organisms, wear waterproof boots and gloves during cleanup.



Wash hands often using soap and disinfected water, during and after handling contaminated items in flood cleanup activities.

To begin cleanup, pump out any remaining floodwater, remove mud and debris, discard damaged furnishings, and cut away and properly dispose of flood-stained insulation. The home and buildings should be dried as quickly as possible to prevent the growth of molds. To dry the home/building:

- Heating should be restored as quickly as possible.
- Increase ventilation by opening doors and windows.
- Drying may also be promoted by fans, dehumidifiers, heaters and air conditioners.
- Remove and properly dispose of damaged wallboard and dry structural portion of the wall prior to replacing the wallboard.

The drying out process could take several weeks and molds will continue to grow as long as humidity is high. If the house is not dried out properly, a musty odor, signifying mold growth, can remain long after the flood.

Cleanup can begin as soon as floodwater recedes and should involve thorough washing and disinfecting of the walls, floors, closets, shelves and contents of the house. Clean walls, hard-surfaced floors, and household surfaces with soap and water. Then disinfect with a solution of one cup of household bleach per five gallons of water or with cleaning agents that contain disinfectants. Repeat this treatment several times during the following month until the mold stops reappearing. Test surfaces for color fastness before disinfecting. You may need

to remove baseboards, clean and disinfect the area behind them, and then install new baseboards.

In addition, fiberboard, fibrous insulation, and disposable filters should be replaced if they are present in your heating and air conditioning system and contacted floodwater. Use disinfectants and sanitizers on the duct work if it has been flooded.

Wash all clothes and linens in hot water.

Materials that are wet and cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried should be discarded, as they can remain a source of mold growth. Mattresses and stuffed furniture cannot be adequately cleaned, even with steam, and should be discarded.



Food - Is it safe to keep?

Any food, fresh or frozen, that has been submerged or come in contact with floodwater should be discarded. If in doubt, throw it out. Other unsafe food items that must be discarded include:

- All perishable food items left without refrigeration.
- All frozen food items that have been thawed due to lack of power.



Unopened canned goods which are wholesome in appearance may be kept. The cans must be thoroughly washed in soapy water, rinsed with clean water and sanitized by immersing in a dilute bleach solution (one teaspoon of household bleach per gallon of water) then air dried.

Drinking Water - Is It Safe?

Flooding could pose a threat to residential drinking water wells. Potential drinking water contaminants include bacteria, viruses, and parasites. The presence of these organisms in drinking water may indicate contamination from various sources which include human and animal wastes.

The most common illnesses due to contamination of drinking water are gastrointestinal disorders. Young children, elderly persons and persons with deficient immune systems are likely to have more serious health effects. This includes people with HIV/AIDS, and people on immunosuppressive therapy (i.e., cancer treatments, transplant recipients, etc.).

Drinking water from wells should not be used if:

- The well or the immediate area around the well has been exposed to accumulations of flood/surface water.
- It is a shallow well that has not had direct contact with flood/surface water but is in the vicinity of accumulations of flood/surface water.



Use a safe supply of water instead, such as commercially bottled water. If a safe supply of water is not available, water from wells affected by flood water should be boiled at a rolling boil on the stovetop for 1 minute prior to being used for human consumption. Do not use the microwave to disinfect water. This includes water for brushing of teeth and rinsing of produce. If well water is cloudy, bottled water may be the only solution.

Continue to use a safe supply of water or boil water until a satisfactory bacterial analysis of the well water has been obtained and all lines have been properly disinfected. Water sampling containers can be picked up at any health department office. If a satisfactory bacteria sample cannot be obtained, chlorination of the well may be necessary.

On-Site Sewage System & Garbage

On-site sewage systems located in flooded areas may not function due to saturation of the ground and should not be used until the water subsides and the ground has dried out. To prevent on-site sewage system failure and further ground water contamination:

- **Do not use your sinks, showers and toilets until the ground has dried out.**

Until sewage disposal systems are back to normal, alternate waste-water disposal methods will be necessary. For example, portable toilets may be used on a temporary basis.

If your garbage collection service is interrupted, store your garbage in tightly sealed, impervious containers until they can be removed for proper disposal. Contact your local landfill or refuse hauler to determine the best disposal option for flood damaged materials.

For more information contact:

Benton-Franklin Health District
Environmental Health Division
7102 W. Okanogan Place
Kennewick, WA 99336
509-460-4205

BFHD-E-0088 (Revised 1/09)

TIPS FOR FLOOD CLEANUP

home safety series



www.bfhd.wa.gov

