

Flood Safety Tips

Marathon County Health Department

Be Careful With Water!

If your water shows changes in color, clarity or odor, or if your well was submerged, DO NOT DRINK IT. Drink bottled water, if available; or, to make water safe, do one of the following:

- 1) Boiling: Bring water to a boil for five minutes. The flat taste can be eliminated by pouring it from one clean container to another.
- 2) Bleach: Add unscented household bleach, using two to four drops per quart, or ½ teaspoon per gallon of water, shake and let stand for 30 minutes. THIS TREATMENT WILL NOT KILL PARASITES.

Have your well tested to be sure it is safe before you resume drinking your water.

DO NOT SWIM OR BATHE IN RIVERS, STREAMS, CREEKS, OR LAKES IN FLOODED AREAS! The water may contain harmful organisms and debris.

Be Careful What You Eat!

- 1) If your refrigerator/freezer has been without power for several hours, food should be discarded.
 - 2) Any food item that has come in contact with flood waters or sewage should be discarded.
- WHEN IN DOUBT, DO NOT EAT SUSPICIOUS FOOD!

Be Careful With Human Waste!

Sewage may back-flow from your septic or municipal system through floor drains into basements. This area must be disinfected* with a chlorine solution. If this has happened, anything that cannot be cleaned should be discarded.

**You can make a disinfectant solution by mixing 4 ounces (. cup) of household bleach (chlorine) with one (1) gallon of water. NEVER MIX CHEMICALS SUCH AS AMMONIA AND CHLORINE TOGETHER! TOXIC FUMES CAN FORM.*

Prevent Injury!

- 1) Electrical Safety:

Do not attempt to restore or work on power sources without first contacting your utility.

Avoid all downed power lines, especially those in water.

You must consult your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators. Be aware that it is against the law and a violation of all electrical codes to connect generators to your home's electrical circuits without the approved, automatic interrupt devices. If a generator is on line when electrical service is restored, it can become a major fire hazard. In addition, the improper connection of a generator to your home's electrical circuits may endanger line workers helping to restore power in your area.

- 2) Physical Hazards:

Avoid wading in water without proper foot protection. Broken glass, metal fragments, and other debris may be submerged in the flooded area.

Wear proper eyewear, gloves, and other protective equipment when cleaning up an area.

Boats should be used with caution. Submerged items such as signs, fences, etc. may not be visible and can result in serious injury.

3) Insects:

Remove any standing water from artificial containers, such as tires, dishes, cans, or building material.

4) Wounds:

If you are wounded or punctured, contact your physician or local health department as soon as possible. A tetanus booster is recommended at least every 10 years.

Reoccupying Your Homes

A major health concern, after flooding or other water damage in homes, is the growth of molds, bacteria, and other biological contaminants. This is often associated with a musty mildew odor, as well as visible evidence of mold growth on walls, floors, carpeting, or other water damaged items. Some persons may be allergic to or develop allergies or asthma-like symptoms from exposure to these contaminants.

It is important that items in a home contributing to mold and bacterial growth be cleaned and dried as soon as possible. See item(s) below. If this is not possible the item(s) should be discarded. The following are provided as general recommendations for dealing with water damage.

HOME INSPECTION AFTER WATER DAMAGE

- X Do not pump water out of flooded basements too quickly. Water saturated ground could push the walls in.
- X Inspect and clean all appliances that have been in contact with water.
- X The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is warning flood victims that all gas control valves, electric circuit breakers, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), and fuses that have been under water must be replaced to avoid explosions and fires. Even if these safety devices appear to function after being submerged in a flood, they are unfit for continued use and cannot be repaired. They may eventually fail, causing explosions or fires. Other parts of gas and electric appliances that have been submerged such as fans, motors, electric circuits, and venting systems should be evaluated by a qualified technician for continued safe operation. Entire appliances may need to be replaced.
- X Have professionals check heating/cooling ducts and wall insulation for mold growth.
- X Look for obvious mold growth throughout the house including attics, basements and crawlspaces, and around the foundation.

CORRECTING WATER DAMAGE

- X Discard any water-damaged furnishings such as carpet, drapes, stuffed toys, upholstered furniture, mattresses, wicker furniture, ceiling tiles, and other porous items unless they can be cleaned by steam cleaning or hot water washing and thorough drying.
- X Remove and replace wet insulation to prevent conditions where biological pollutants can grow.
- X Wash surfaces and floors with a household chlorine bleach solution prepared by mixing 4 ounces (. cup) of bleach with 1 gallon of water.
- X Seal all leaks (ceilings, walls, foundations) and correct improper surface drainage.
- X Reduce moisture generation in crawl spaces by ventilation.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marathon County Health Department at 715-261-1900 or 800-236-0153, if you are located in Western Marathon County.
