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## Flood CleanUp and Safety Tips

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters in the US. Most floods are due to heavy or steady rain for several hours or days that saturate the ground.

### After a Flood - Clean up

Any water that enters your home from the outside should be considered contaminated, even if it appears to be clean and clear. Because of this, cleaning up after flooding is always a serious matter, because the water may carry disease-causing microorganisms. Remember to wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots, during cleanup.

#### General Clean up procedures

❖ **Mold** – Dry and Clean Out Your Home

It is absolutely necessary to dry and clean the wet materials and surfaces immediately to prevent the growth of mold and mildew and to reduce the risk of disease transmission, and other conditions such as allergic reactions and asthma attacks.

❖ **Microbes** – Remove Standing Water

Floodwater can contain sewage, decaying animal carcasses, and disease-causing microorganisms. Any standing water due to a flood can be a perfect breeding ground for these microorganisms, which can become airborne and be inhaled.

❖ **Chemical Contaminants** – Protect Yourself from Chemical Contaminants

Flood waters can carry many contaminants, including chemicals. It is recommended to wear rubber boots and heavy rubber gloves. Wear old clothing that you can discard when you've finished with the cleanup. Waterproof rain gear offers somewhat better protection.

❖ **CO poisoning**

Combustion devices (such as gas powered generators, camp stoves, lanterns, charcoal-burning devices, etc) should not be used indoors to prevent carbon monoxide levels from building up. Remember, these devices are designed to be used outdoors, not indoors.

❖ **Airborne asbestos/lead dust**

Flooding in your home can disturb materials that may contain asbestos or lead, which can lead to elevated levels of asbestos or lead. If you suspect that your home contains asbestos or lead, please contact your local health department for information and resources.

❖ **Food**

- a. Throw away any food that has come into contact with flood water that is not in a sealed container such as a tin can that has not been opened. Remove the labels and wash the container in hot, soapy water. Dry and re-label the can.
- b. Food containers with screw threads, snap lids, twist caps and home canned foods cannot be decontaminated and must be thrown away.
- c. Frozen foods that were not directly exposed to flood water may be salvageable if they haven't thawed out. However, if the food has been sitting at room temperature for more than two or three hours, or if it has an unusual color, texture or odor, it should be discarded immediately.

- ❖ **Home structure** – Because your home may have structural damage, make sure to look outside for foundation cracks, collapsed or damaged porch roofs and overhangs, and any other damage before entering your home.

Public Water System - Even public water systems can become contaminated during flooding, so don't assume the water is safe. Contact your water supplier or watch for advisory notices in the local newspapers, radio, television, or your water supplier's website.

Private Water System - After a serious flood, it is very likely that the water well and plumbing will have become contaminated. Do not use the water for cooking, washing dishes, washing hands, bathing, brushing teeth, or making ice unless it has been boiled. Use bottled water or boiled water to prepare baby formula. See the enclosed instructions on disinfecting your system.

## After a Flood—Safety Considerations

- ❖ **Electrical**

Do not enter a flooded room (or basement) if there is any chance that electrical panels, switches, outlets or appliances came in contact with water. If it appears that water has reached any power source in the flooded area, contact the power company and have the electricity disconnected. Remember, rubber boots and gloves do not protect you from electrical shock.

- ❖ **Gas**

If the furnace or water heater have been submerged, shut off the fuel supply (natural gas, propane, fuel oil) to the appliance. The appliance will require servicing before it can be used again.

- ❖ **Slippery floors/falls**

Wet surfaces can be very slippery. Watch your step!

- ❖ **Contaminants**

Flood waters can carry many contaminants, including chemicals. Be very cautious about entering an enclosed, flooded area without skin and breathing protection.

- ❖ **Structural Damage**

Fast moving water may have caused structural damage to your home. Be especially cautious about entering a flooded area if there is any evidence that the walls or floor have been weakened. Also, prolonged wetting can cause structural damage to your home, so it is absolutely necessary to dry and clean the wet materials and surfaces immediately.

For additional information contact Franklin County Public Health at  
(614) 525-3160 or visit [www.myfcph.org](http://www.myfcph.org).

