



FACT SHEET

Key Facts About Flood Recovery

CDC offers these essential tips to help you recover from a flood.

How to Avoid Illness

Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before preparing or eating food, after toilet use, after participating in flood cleanup activities, and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a doctor or health department determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary.

How to Make Sure Your Food is Safe

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. For infants, use only pre-prepared canned baby formula that requires no added water, rather than powdered formulas prepared with treated water. Thawed food can usually be eaten or refrozen if it is still "refrigerator cold," or if it still contains ice crystals. To be safe, remember, "When in doubt, throw it out." Discard any refrigerated or frozen food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.

How to Make Sure Your Water is Safe

Listen for public announcements on the safety of the municipal water supply. Flooded, private water wells will need to be tested and disinfected after flood waters recede. Questions about testing should be directed to your local or state health departments. Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. Your state or local health department can make specific recommendations for boiling or treating drinking water in your area.

How to Handle Animals and Mosquitoes

Many wild animals have been forced from their natural habitats by flooding, and many domestic animals are also without homes after the flood. Take care to avoid these animals. Do not corner an animal. If an animal must be removed, contact your local animal control authorities. If you are bitten by any animal, seek immediate medical attention. If you are bitten by a snake, first try to accurately identify the type of snake so that, if poisonous, the correct anti-venom may be administered.

Contact local or state health and agricultural officials for state guidelines on disposal of dead animals. Protect yourself from mosquitoes: use screens on dwellings, wear long-sleeved and long-legged clothing, and use insect repellents that contain DEET.

How to Deal With Chemical Hazards

Be aware of potential chemical hazards you may encounter during flood recovery. Flood waters may have buried or moved hazardous chemical containers of solvents or other industrial chemicals from their normal

Key Facts About Flood Recovery

(continued from previous page)

storage places. If any propane tanks (whether 20-lb. tanks from a gas grill or household propane tanks) are discovered, do not attempt to move them yourself. These represent a very real danger of fire or explosion, and if any are found, police or fire departments or your State Fire Marshal's office should be contacted immediately. Car batteries, even those in flood water, may still contain an electrical charge and should be removed with extreme caution by using insulated gloves. Avoid coming in contact with any acid that may have spilled from a damaged car battery.

How to Deal with Electric and Gas Utilities

Electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks should be shut off to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions until it is safe to use them. Use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns, rather than candles, gas lanterns, or torches. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately. Notify the gas company or the police or fire departments or State Fire Marshal's office, and do not turn on the lights or do anything that could cause a spark. Avoid any downed power lines, particularly those in water. All electrical equipment and appliances must be completely dry before returning them to service. It is advisable to have a certified electrician check these items if there is any question. Also, remember not to operate any gas-powered equipment indoors.

How to Clean Up

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. If there has been a backflow of sewage into the house, wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup. Remove and discard contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected, such as wallcoverings, cloth, rugs, and drywall. Additional guidance is available from the Environmental Protection Agency at www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/flood.html and the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov/hazards/floods/whatshouldidoafter.shtm.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods, or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY).

August 12, 2004

Page 2 of 2