

Disaster Recovery Reminders

Personal Protection

When cleaning up storm-damaged areas, be sure to wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes to prevent cuts and scratches from debris. Do not let children play in floodwater and discard any items that come into contact with floodwater. Any food (including food in plastic or glass), medicines, cosmetics or bottled water that has come in contact with floodwater should be discarded. If in doubt, throw it out. Intact cans may be thoroughly disinfected with one-quarter cup of bleach to one gallon of water, and then used.

Carbon Monoxide

Do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent, or fireplace. Do not use gas-powered generators or pressure washers in enclosed spaces including indoors or in the garage. If you suspect you are experiencing any symptoms of CO poisoning, open doors, and windows, turn off gas appliances and go outside. In cases of severe CO poisoning, call 911 emergency services.

Around Your Home

When cleaning up debris around your home, be sure ladders are secure before climbing on them to clean the roof and gutters. If you plan to use a chainsaw to clear debris, be sure to operate the machine according to the instructions. If injury occurs, call 9-1-1 or seek immediate medical help.

Flooding can cause mold to grow inside your home, which can cause allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections, and other respiratory problems.

Food Safety

- Throw away all food including fruits, vegetables, and other produce if it comes in contact with any flood water.
- Throw away all screw cap or crimp cap containers if they become submerged.
- Discard any cold or cool food that has warmed. Food that is still frozen or cold (45 degrees Fahrenheit or less) is safe to prepare.
- Commercially prepared cans of food should not be eaten if there is a bulge or opening on the can.
- Cans with screw caps, soda pop bottle tops, pop-tops or twist-caps cannot be disinfected and should be discarded.
- Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be used if you remove the labels and then disinfect the cans in a bleach solution. Use one fourth cup of bleach in one gallon of water; re-label the cans including expiration date and type of food. Assume that home-canned food is unsafe.
- The basics of breastfeeding during an emergency are much the same as they are in normal times. Continuing to breastfeed whenever the baby seems hungry maintains a mother's milk supply and provides familiar comfort. The release of hormones while a mother is breastfeeding relieves stress and anxiety and is calming to both mother and baby.

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First Aid

First aid, even for minor cuts and burns, is extremely important if exposure to waters potentially contaminated with human, animal, or toxic wastes occurs. Immediately clean out all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Most cuts, except minor scratches, sustained during flood cleanup activities will warrant treatment to prevent tetanus. If you are injured, contact a physician or clinic to determine the necessary type of treatment. A tetanus shot should be administered every 10 years, but if a patient can't recall the date of the last shot, another tetanus shot can and should be administered.

Sanitation and Hygiene: Preventing Waterborne Illness

Contamination levels, if any, vary among water systems. If your area is officially notified that emergency water purification is necessary, the MSDH advises the following:

- Vigorously boil water for at least a full minute before using.
- Disinfect by adding unscented chlorine bleach in these amounts: two drops of bleach for each quart of clear water or four drops of bleach for each quart of muddy or dirty water. Let the water stand at least 30 minutes before using.
- Basic hygiene is very important during this emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before eating, after toilet use, after participating in cleanup activities and after handling articles contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Flooding that occurs after the tornado may mean that water contains contaminants from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste, and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and clean water. Apply antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection. If a wound or sore develops redness, swelling or drainage, see a physician or consult clinic staff.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater. They can be exposed to water contaminated with fecal matter. Do not allow children to play with toys that have been in floodwater until the toys have been disinfected. Disinfect with one fourth cup of bleach in one gallon of water.

Power Outages: Preventing Fire Hazards

- Use battery-powered lanterns and flashlights instead of candles.
- If you must use candles, make sure you put them in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items.