



Helping Others with comPassion and Empathy - H.O.P.E.

Patrick H Metz - Director

DATE: September 23, 2016

TO: Richland County Media

FROM: Marianne Stanek,
Richland County HHS Public Health
647-8821

RE: Drinking Water and Flood Safety

Water Safety

When in doubt, if the water is CLOUDY, ODOROUS, COLORED - **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER!**

DO NOT use water from a private well that has been flooded. If you are not certain about the safety of your water supply you should have your well tested for bacteria. Until the test results are known, drink bottled water or water from a known, safe, source. If necessary you can make the water safe to drink by boiling it for five minutes.

Do NOT swim or bathe in rivers, streams, or creeks in flooded areas!

Richland County Health & Human Services Public Health has water test kits available free of charge for the testing of private wells. These test kits are only for testing private well water. Water test kits are available through Public Health at the Community Services Building.

Again, DO NOT use water from a private well that has been flooded.

Food Safety

- 1) **When in doubt, do not eat suspicious food.**
- 2) Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. Discard any food without a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the can labels, thoroughly wash the cans, and then disinfect them with a solution consisting of six ounces of bleach to one gallon of water. Re-label your cans, including expiration date, with a marker. Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with flood water because they cannot be disinfected.

For infants, use only pre-prepared canned baby formula that requires no added water, rather than powdered formulas prepared with treated water.



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- 3) If your refrigerator or freezer has been without power for a period of time, all stored items should be carefully checked. Perishable food left at room temperature for more than two hours should be discarded. Frozen foods that have thawed should be discarded if not consumed immediately or kept refrigerated.
- 4) Questions can be direct to public health at 647-8821 or to local extension agents.

Sewer/Waste Water Concerns

- 1) Private septic systems that have been flooded are no longer reliable. Portable toilets or other appropriate facilities should be used. Remember, you should not have contact with water that has been contaminated with human wastes.
- 2) Sewage may back flow from your septic or municipal system through floor drains, toilets, etc. Any affected areas, such as basements must be cleaned and disinfected, as with a chlorine solution. Anything that cannot be cleaned should be thrown out.

Garbage Precautions

Place household garbage, like food waste, in waterproof containers. It is important to remove household garbage every four days during the disaster. Garbage can attract animals and disease-bearing insects, if possible store in a rigid container.

Injury Prevention

Injuries are a major safety concern when flooding occurs. You need to take appropriate precautions to avoid injury.

1) Electrical Safety:

Do not attempt to restore or work on power sources without first contacting your utility. Homes that are flooded should have their power disconnected by the utility company.

Emergency generators should ONLY be used in well ventilated areas. Otherwise carbon monoxide, a colorless odorless gas can build up with fatal consequences.

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.



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3) Increased Insect Activity:

Wear Insect Repellent when out of doors. Mosquitoes and other insects may transmit diseases such as West Nile Virus and encephalitis. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully when applying repellants containing DEET.

Stagnant water is a breeding place for disease carrying mosquitoes. Remove any standing water from artificial containers, such as tires, dishes, cans, or building material.

4) Animals:

Beware of wild animals, such as raccoons and skunks. Rabies is always a concern in these types of animals. Also avoid dogs and cats you do not know. If bitten by any animal, contact your primary health care provider or Richland County Health & Human Services Public Health for advice.

If you have evacuated your home, animals may have sheltered in your home, garage, or other buildings. Carefully inspect your buildings before reoccupying.

5) Wounds:

If you are wounded or punctured, contact your physician or Richland County Health & Human Services Public Health as soon as possible. Tetanus boosters are recommended every 7-10 years and vaccination may be necessary. Richland County Health & Human Services Public Health has a good supply of Tetanus vaccine available, and will make vaccine available to anyone needing protection.

Future Concerns

A major health concern after flooding or other water damage in homes is the growth of molds, bacteria, and other biological contaminants. Additional information on prevention of mold and bacterial contamination as well as correcting and cleaning up water damage will be provided during future broadcasts.

If you have questions please contact Richland County Health & Human Services Public Health at: 647-8821.