

Cleanup: Flood Water and Debris After a Disaster or Emergency

When returning to your home after a hurricane or flood, be aware that flood water and debris may contain sewage and other hazardous items. Protect yourself and your family by following these steps:

Inside and Outside the Home

- Keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of affected area.
- Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected (such as, mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and most paper products).
- Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters.
- Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (such as flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, and other plumbing fixtures) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent.
- Help the drying process by using fans, air conditioning units, and dehumidifiers.
- After completing the cleanup, wash your hands with soap and warm water. Use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands).
 - Or you may use water that has been disinfected for personal hygiene use (solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Wash all clothes worn during the cleanup in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from uncontaminated clothes and linens.
- Wash clothes contaminated with flood or sewage water in hot water and detergent.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

Health Risks

Flood waters and standing waters pose various risks, including infectious diseases, chemical hazards, and injuries. Eating or drinking anything contaminated by flood water can cause diarrheal disease. To protect yourself and your family:

- Practice good hygiene (handwashing) after contact with flood waters or debris.
- Do not allow children to play in flood water areas or near debris.
- Wash children's hands frequently (always before meals).
- Do not allow children to play with toys that have been contaminated by flood water or debris and have not been disinfected.

Wound Infections

Open wounds and rashes exposed to flood waters can become infected. To protect yourself and your family:

- Avoid exposure to flood waters if you have an open wound.
- Cover open wounds with a waterproof bandage.
- Keep open wounds as clean as possible by washing well with soap and clean water.
- If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.