

STAYING SAFE AFTER FLOODING

FLOOD AND WATER SAFETY

Food:

If electricity at your home has been off for long periods of time, throw away foods that can spoil (like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, leftovers, etc.) that have been above 40 degrees for two hours or more.

When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away food that may have come in contact with floodwater – like:

- Home-canned foods.
- All foods in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, cellophane (plastic wrap) or cloth.
- Meat, poultry, eggs or fish.
- Spices, seasonings, extracts, flour, sugar, grain, coffee and other items you store in canisters.
- Unopened jars with waxed cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing. Also, throw away preserves sealed with paraffin wax.
- Throw away any fruits and vegetables that have been in contact with floodwaters – including those that have not been harvested from gardens.
- Wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.

You do **NOT** need to throw away the following items if they have been in contact with floodwater:

- Commercially canned foods that came into contact with floodwater and have been properly cleaned by: labeling cans with the name of food in permanent marker; removing labels; washing cans in water containing detergent; soaking cans for at least one minute in chlorine solution; rinsing in clean, cool water; placing on sides to dry (do not stack cans).
- Dishes and glassware if they are sanitized by boiling in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

Water:

- Local authorities will tell you if tap water is safe to drink or use for cooking or bathing.
- If the water is unsafe, authorities may issue “boil water advisories” or tell you to use bottled water. Follow boil water advisories exactly to safely disinfect tap water before using it. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, cooking, food preparation, dishwashing, making ice and coffee, mixing baby formula and brushing teeth.

- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that come in contact with floodwater with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling these items in clean water – or by soaking them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

PREVENTING AND TREATING OTHER ILLNESSES OR INJURIES AFTER FLOODING

Avoid Floodwater and Mosquitoes:

- Avoid contact with floodwater, which contains contaminants (things like sewage, fuel and hazardous chemicals) and debris from flooded homes, businesses and industrial sites.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Health does not recommend vaccinating all flood survivors against tetanus. If you receive a puncture wound (an injury caused by a pointed object that pierces or penetrates the skin) or have a wound that has come in contact with potentially contaminated floodwater, contact a health care provider promptly and ask if you need a tetanus booster or vaccine.
- Prevent mosquito bites by wearing long pants, socks and long-sleeved shirts and by using insect repellents that contain DEET or Picaridin. To control mosquito populations, drain all standing water left in open containers – such as flower pots or buckets – outside your home or business.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is produced by many types of equipment and is poisonous to breathe.
- Never use a gas-powered pump or generator, pressure washer, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement or garage or near a window, door or vent.
- If your carbon monoxide detector sounds, leave your home immediately and call 9-1-1. Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed or nauseous.

Wash Your Hands:

- Always wash your hands with soap and boiled or disinfected water before preparing or eating food, after toilet use, after participating in cleanup activities and after handling articles contaminated with floodwater or sewage.
- Wash children's hands frequently – always before meals.
- If water isn't available, use alcohol-based sanitizer.

Treat Wounds:

- Clean out all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Contact a doctor to find out whether more treatment is needed, such as a tetanus shot.
- If a wound gets red, swells or drains, seek immediate medical attention.

Medication Safety:

- If you have medicine that is refrigerated and the electricity at your home has been off for long periods of time, do not use it and dispose of it properly.
- If you have medicine that may have come in contact with floodwater, do not use it and dispose of it properly.

Protect Yourself from Mold:

- Clean up and dry out a building quickly – within 24 to 48 hours after flooding if possible. Open doors and windows and use fans to dry out the building.
- If your home has been flooded and has been closed up for several days, you should assume it has been contaminated with mold. Remove visible mold from hard surfaces with commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of one cup of bleach in one gallon of water.
- People with asthma, allergies, or other breathing conditions and immune suppressions may be more sensitive to mold. If you or your loved ones have health problems after exposure to mold, contact your health care provider.

Clean up safely:

- When cleaning up after flooding, whether inside or outside, always keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup is completed.
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles when cleaning.
- Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected.
- Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces with hot water and laundry or dish detergent.

For more information, visit the following:

- ReadyPA – www.ReadyPA.org
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection – www.dep.pa.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.emergency.cdc.gov
- Food and Drug Administration – www.fda.gov