

AFTER THE FLOOD – HEALTH RISKS

Most importantly, follow public safety guidance and do not try to enter your property until allowed to do so. There may be structural damage causing a major safety threat. Once cleared for re-entry, keep these things in mind:

- Floodwaters may contain dangerous materials, such as fecal matter from overflowing sewage systems, agricultural runoff, household chemicals, and chemicals from industrial areas.
- Wading in floodwaters can cause a variety of injuries, bites from rodents or snakes, or infection of open wounds. If you have an open cut or sore that comes in contact with flood water, it will need disinfecting. If a wound becomes red or swollen, seek immediate medical attention.
- There is some risk of disease from eating or drinking anything contaminated with floodwater.
- It is unsafe and unsanitary to allow children to play in floodwater areas. Wash their hands frequently and always before meals. Ensure that all toys have been disinfected properly. You can disinfect toys using a solution of one cup of bleach in five gallons of water.
- To properly dispose of household hazardous chemicals, and you live in Sarpy County, contact Under the Sink at 402-444-7465.

Identify and throw away unsafe food:

- Any foods that had been frozen or refrigerated and power was lost for more than a few hours, needs to be destroyed.
- Canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged should be discarded.
- Dispose of any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- The contents of unopened, undamaged cans are safe to consume, but the cans need to be washed first. Remove all labels, wash the cans and dip them in a solution of one cup of bleach per five gallons of water. Re-label the cans with a marker.

Safe water use:

- In times of crisis, follow the advice from local and state officials. Local health departments can help you determine if your well water needs to be tested and/or how to purify it so it is potable.
- In Nebraska, the Office of Drinking Water and Environmental Health, under the Division of Public Health, issues the boil water alerts, after being notified by local authorities. If the water is not safe, follow instructions to use bottled water or to boil or disinfect water for cooking, cleaning or bathing.

MOLD

Recognizing Mold:

Sight – Are the walls and ceiling discolored, or do they show signs of mold growth or water damage?

Smell – Do you smell a bad odor, such as a musty earthy smell or a foul stench? You may have mold where it is not clearly visible.

Important facts about mold:

It is impossible to fully remove mold from porous surfaces. Throw out any items that cannot be cleaned and dried. Mold removal is very important. Even dead mold can cause an allergic reaction in some people.

Examples of porous items:

- Carpeting and carpet padding
- Upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, wall studs
- Floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material
- Some clothing, leather, paper, wood

Preventing Mold Growth

- Controlling moisture in your home is the most critical factor for preventing mold growth.
- Open all doors and windows.
- Use an air conditioner, dehumidifier or heater, if possible, to remove moisture.
- To avoid spreading mold spores throughout your home, have your home HVAC system checked and cleaned by a service professional. Professional cleaning will kill existing mold and prevent mold growth in the units.
- Use fans to circulate air. Place by windows or doors to blow the air outdoors and not spread the mold indoors.
- Clean wet items and surfaces with detergent and water, then dry quickly.
- Spray with a fungicide or other mildew preventative products. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Remove Existing Mold

Protect yourself during mold removal. Wear non-porous gloves, protective eyewear and clothes that can be washed right away or thrown out. Use a mask or respirator to filter out mold spores. (Usually it will be labeled as an N95, 3M #1860 or TC-21C particulate respirator.) Open all of the doors and windows for ventilation.

- Brush off mold and mildew growth on household items outdoors to prevent scattering of spores in the house.
- Dampen moldy materials before removal to minimize the number of airborne mold spores.
- Vacuum floors, ceilings and walls.
- Scrub hard surfaces such as plastic, glass, metal and counter tops with a non-ammonia soap, detergent or bleach and water solution. If you use bleach:
 - Add ¼ - ½ cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water. **Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners. This will produce dangerous, toxic fumes.**
 - Wood and concrete surfaces may need 1 ½ cups of bleach per gallon of water.
 - The surface must remain wet for about 15 minutes to allow the solution to disinfect.
- Rinse with clean water and then quickly dry surfaces. Use fans, dehumidifiers or open doors and windows.