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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Recommendations for Immunization  
Following Exposure to Flood Waters**

Sarpy/Cass Department of Health offers guidelines on hygiene and vaccinations following exposure to flood waters, backed up sewage and the mud remaining after waters have receded. According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, "Historically, outbreaks of communicable disease are uncommon after flood emergencies. Flood waters may be contaminated with fecal material from overflowing sewage systems, or from agricultural operations such as feedlots, etc." Being difficult to see through, flood waters also may carry or camouflage debris that could cause injury.

While skin contact with flood water may not, in itself, present a serious health risk, there is some risk of disease from cuts or sores that are exposed to flood water. Any break in the skin should be kept as clean as possible by washing with soap and clean water to prevent infections. Recommendations for tetanus wound management as follows:

- Anyone with a clean, minor wound with exposure to contaminated flood waters and has an unknown history or less than 3 doses needs a dose of tetanus (Td or Tdap).
- If the individual has 3 or more doses, and the wound is minor and clean, he/she would need a dose ONLY if it has been 10 years since the last dose.
- All other wounds would require a booster dose if more than 5 years since the last dose. Individuals are encouraged to talk to their physician regarding the vaccine.

Across the state's flooded areas, tetanus boosters are being offered by public health departments to public safety workers and 1<sup>st</sup> responders, following those same guidelines. However, community members should consult with and, if necessary, receive the vaccine from their providers.

Other precautions to take are to keep children out of the water, always wear closed toed footwear and long pants while working in the water or mud, and shower with hot water and soap afterwards, taking special care to clean beneath finger nails. Increase hand-washing for you and your family and keep your hands away from your face. These measures will reduce your risk of infection from contaminated waters.

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