



## MIDDLESEX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# FACT SHEET

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## After a Flood: Cleanup of Flood Water

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

### Inside 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 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.

### 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 areas.
- Have your onsite waste-water system professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage (If applicable).
- Wash all clothes worn during the cleanup in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from uncontaminated clothes and linens.
- After completing the cleanup, wash your hands with soap and water.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

**The information in this fact sheet is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for professional advice.**

Source of information: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Website: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp>

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## After a Flood: Cleaning up Mold

After drying out your house and taking protective measures, remove items that cannot be cleaned, and then clean your home and household items.

### Taking Steps to Protect Yourself

Note: If the cleanup is a large job, you should consult or contract with a professional who is experienced in cleaning up mold. If it is a smaller job that you can do yourself, then take these precautions:

- Protect your eyes with glasses or goggles.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup.
- Wear outer clothing (long-sleeved shirts and long pants) that can be easily removed and laundered or discarded.
- Shorten the amount of time you are in the area.
- Minimize the spread of airborne spores by using work practices such as
  - decreasing foot traffic in the area,
  - avoiding dry sweeping,
  - avoiding rapid movements (such as jerking or throwing moldy objects), and
  - covering moldy objects when removing them.

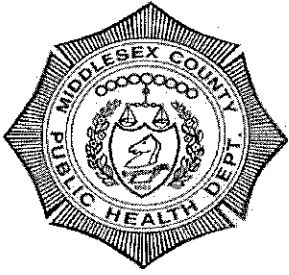
### Deciding Whether to Wear Respiratory Protection

Respirators are most commonly used in workplaces, where employer programs ensure that the correct type is selected and properly fitted.

**Removal and cleaning are important because even dead mold may cause allergic reactions in some people.**

- Make sure the working area is well ventilated.
- Remove all porous items that have been wet for more than 48 hours and that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried. These items can remain a source of mold growth and should be removed from the home. **When in doubt, take it out!** However, homeowners may want to temporarily store items outside of the home until insurance claims can be filed.
- Porous, noncleanable items include carpeting and carpet padding, upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material, clothing, leather, paper, wood, or food.
- Clean nonporous surfaces such as walls, floors, and counter surfaces with soap and water. **(Use non-ammonia soap or detergent.)** Use a stiff brush on rough surface materials such as concrete. Never mix chlorine bleach solution with other cleaning solutions or ammonia because toxic fumes could be produced

(More)



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## Floods: Sanitation and Hygiene

It is critical for you to remember to practice basic hygiene during the emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled (then cooled) or disinfected:

- before preparing or eating food;
- after toilet use;
- after participating in flood cleanup activities; and
- after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage.

Flood waters may contain fecal material from overflowing sewage systems, and agricultural and industrial byproducts. Although skin contact with flood water does not, by itself, pose a serious health risk, there is some risk of disease from eating or drinking anything contaminated with flood water. If you have any open cuts or sores that will be exposed to flood water, keep them as clean as possible by washing well with soap to control infection. If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention. In addition, parents need to help children avoid waterborne illness. Do not allow children to play in flood water areas, wash children's hands frequently (always before meals), and do not allow children to play with flood-water contaminated toys that have not been disinfected. You can disinfect toys using a solution of one cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water.

Source of information: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Website: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/sanitation.asp>

September 20, 2004



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## Private Potable Well Protection Measures

If you utilize a well as your primary source for drinking water, you should consider these measures to ensure that the wellhead is protected against flooding or other potential sources of surface contamination.

There are two types of wells in New Jersey:

- Drilled wells (Which have a sealed casing with a metal cap)
- Dug wells (Which are shallow and prone to ground water intrusion causing contamination concerns)

### Drilled Wells

On a routine basis, inspect the well cover to ensure it is secure and in good repair. The current well installation format extends the casing out of the ground at least two (2) feet. A metal threaded cap with a built in vented, screened cover is the proper protection for your wellhead. Utilizing a casing extension and vented cap affords the homeowner an opportunity to maintain the equipment inside the well and sanitize the water, if necessary.

### Dug Wells

This type well is susceptible to both surface and groundwater intrusions, which impact the well water quality. These type wells usually have a concrete cover, which needs a routine inspection to ensure it fits tightly onto the concrete well rings used to build this type of well. After a flooding event or another source of ground water contamination, which impacts the wellhead, it is strongly recommended that the well water is boiled for two minutes then cooled prior to using for drinking purposes. Using an online column type ultraviolet light treatment system is needed to protect the water supply from pathogenic Coliform Bacteria.

### Well Testing

Whether you utilize a drilled or hand dug well, it is recommended that your well water should be tested by a NJDEP Certified Laboratory after a flooding event or other suspected source of ground water contamination, which may have an adverse effect on your well. The Coliform Bacteria, Nitrates and Volatile Organic Contaminate tests are considered important to evaluate whether your well water is safe for human consumption.

If there are further questions, feel free to contact the Middlesex County Health Department Water Pollution Division. The contact number is 732-745-8856.



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## Flood Protection Measures for Homes serviced by a Septic System

The following information should be available for review when flood waters are expected to impact your septic system.

### Vital Details

- Keep a sketch of your existing septic system, which denotes the location of the septic tank and disposal area, on hand
- Conduct routine inspection checks to ensure the septic tank cover and cleanout ports are secured tightly.
- Establish a routine septic maintenance program whereby the tank is pumped out at least once every three (3) years.
- Place all unsecured rugs and furniture in the basement area at a level at least two (2) feet off the floor.

### When Flooding Occurs

- Minimize flushing the toilets or excessive use of water for other reasons.
- Stay out of the basement area if flood waters or a sewage backup occurs.

### Cleaning up after a flood

- When performing the cleanup tasks listed, neoprene rubber gloves should be used to protect against contamination.
- Have a pump available to remove all accumulated water in the basement. The suction hose for the pump should be placed into the water through an open basement window. Whenever possible, direct the discharge hose on to the ground at the farthest point from the septic system.
- Once the basement area is free of water, fans should be used along with opening the windows to dry out the area. This method of ventilation will also help eliminate odors associated with flood water.
- Check the stored rugs and furniture to ensure they were not damaged by the flood waters.
- Clean and sanitize basement floors. (Utilizing a mixture of one cup of household bleach in one gallon of water, sanitize the basement floor and walls to a point one foot above the flood line. If a sump pump pit exists, the water in the containment area should also be sanitized. Adding one half cup of household bleach to the pit area is sufficient to accomplish the process)
- Prior to using the heating system, hot water heater and electrical systems, they should be checked by an experienced technician.
- If a septic system back up or malfunction occurred outside the dwelling during the flooding event, all sewage related affected materials should be cleaned up and placed in plastic trash bags and disposed at an approved landfill. The same practice applies to the area used to discharge the flood waters from the basement.
- All exterior areas affected by raw sewage should be limed to control any odor issues.

If there are further questions, feel free to contact the Middlesex County Health Department Water Pollution Division. The contact number is 732-745-8856.