Flood Water Cleanup
After a Hurricane or Flood

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:

OUTSIDE THE HOME

- Buildings may no longer be safe following a hurricane or flood. There are a number of dangers that you need to be aware of as you return to and begin cleaning up your home or other buildings. In general, return to buildings during the daytime so that you do not have to use any lights. Be aware of possible structural, electrical, or gas-leak hazards.
- Before entering a building, make sure the main electrical switch is off. Shut off electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- Make sure that all electrical equipment and appliances are completely dry before you use them.
- Stay away from downed power lines. Notify the power company immediately.
- If you suspect a gas leak, leave immediately and notify the gas company. Do not do anything that could cause a spark, such as turn on lights, light matches, or smoke.
- Be aware that hurricanes and flood waters may damage, move, or bury dangerous materials and chemicals.
- Call the fire department to inspect or remove chemicals and other dangerous materials.
- Call the fire department to remove propane tanks. Propane tanks can catch on fire or explode.
- Wear insulated gloves and use caution if you have to remove a car battery. Car batteries can maintain an electrical charge even if flooded.
- 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.
- Have your onsite waste-water system professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

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 can not 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. 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 [teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of ¼ 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. It is recommended that a laundromat be used for washing large quantities of clothes and linens until your onsite waste-water system has been professionally inspected and serviced.
- 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. For more information, please contact your local health department.

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