

After the Flood: Important Information to Remember from Saratoga County Public Health

Although flood waters may have receded, many dangers still exist in areas affected by flood.

Water Safety

Currently all public water in Saratoga County, is safe for drinking. **If you have a private well, it is possible that it has been contaminated if you were directly affected by the flood.**

- Wells should be pumped out and water tested before drinking.
- After a flood, use your emergency supply or boil water before using until there is official word that the water is safe. If the public water system is declared unsafe by health officials, water for drinking and cooking should be boiled vigorously for 10 minutes.

Prevent illness by practicing good sanitation and hygiene

- Do not allow children to play in floodwater or with toys that are contaminated by floodwater.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water before eating and after toilet use, cleanup activities or handling items contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Floodwaters may contain fecal matter from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste, and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and water. Apply antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection.
- If floodwaters are covering your septic tank and leach field, you should not use any flush toilets attached to the system.

Prevent mold growth

Moisture that enters buildings from leaks or flooding accelerates mold growth. Molds can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions and continue to damage materials after the storm.

- Remove standing water from your home or business. Remove wet materials promptly and ventilate; use fans and dehumidifiers if possible.
- If mold growth has already occurred, it is best to have a professional remove it.
- Individuals with known mold allergies or asthma should never clean or remove mold. Be careful about mixing household cleaners and disinfectants, as combining certain types of products can produce toxic fumes and result in injury or death.

Household cleaning tips

Walls, hard-surfaced floors and many other household surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of one (1) cup of bleach to five (5) gallons of water.

- Thoroughly disinfect surfaces that come in contact with food and children's play areas.
- Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean.
- Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, must be air dried in the sun and sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant.
- Steam-clean all carpeting.
- Replace fiberboard, insulation and disposable filters in your heating/cooling system.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during clean-up. It can be difficult to throw away items in a home, particularly those with sentimental value. However, keeping certain items soaked by sewage or floodwaters may be unhealthy. Materials that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours should be discarded.

Garbage storage, collection and disposal

As you start cleaning, you will likely produce a great deal of garbage. Local authorities will tell you where and when collection will occur

- Garbage invites insects and rodents. Rodents, in particular, may be looking for food because the flood may have destroyed their homes and normal food source.
- Store any garbage in watertight, rodent/insect-proof containers with tight-fitting covers. Use plastic liners if available.
- Put garbage in a convenient location but not near your well.

Mosquitoes

It is not necessary to limit outdoor activities. However, you can and should try to reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes.

- Heavy rains and flooding can lead to an increase in mosquitoes that may be infected with West Nile virus. To protect against mosquitoes, remain diligent in your personal mosquito protection efforts. Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours.
- Wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are most active (often at dawn and dusk).
- Consider the use of mosquito repellent, according to directions, when it is necessary to be outdoors when mosquitoes are biting.

To reduce the mosquito population around your home and property,
reduce or eliminate all standing water:

- **Dump out ALL standing water from used tires, tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.**

For more information:

New York State Department of Health
CDC Disaster Response