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## **FLOODING AND SEWAGE SPILLS PERSONAL PROTECTION AND CLEANUP**

### **HEALTH RISK AND PERSONAL PROTECTION**

Flood waters can often contain sewage, so personal protection and cleanup are a concern in both sewage spills and floods. The immediate human health risks of a sewage spill are disease transmission from pathogens in the sewage to people coming into contact with the sewage. The possible pathways of disease transmission are: swallowing and breathing, or cuts and abrasions in the skin. The best method to avoid exposure to pathogens is to stay away from the sewage. If there is contact with the sewage, or contact is needed to proceed with cleanup, use rubber boots and rubber gloves for protection.

### **CLEANUP**

#### **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. Use water that has been boiled for one minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands).
    - Or you may use water that has been disinfected for personal hygiene. Use a solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per one gallon of water. Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of household bleach per one 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.
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### 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 area.
- Clean up sewage solids (fecal material) and place in properly functioning toilet or double bag and place in garbage container.
- On hard surface areas such as asphalt or concrete it is safe to use a 2% bleach solution, or 1/2 cup of bleach to five gallons of water.
- Have your onsite waste-water system professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage.
- If you have a water supply well that was covered by flood water it should be disinfected and purged.
- 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. Use water that has been boiled for one minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands).
  - Or you may use water that has been disinfected for personal hygiene. Use a solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per one gallon of water. Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of household bleach per one gallon of water.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

### OUTSIDE PUBLIC AREAS

Avoid contact with sewage if possible. If the area is a high public use area such as a park and school, it should be posted with “**Keep Out Sewage Contamination**” signs until cleaned up. Once the floodwaters recede and the area dries out, the health risks are significantly lowered, as sunlight and drying eliminate most of the possible infectious germs contained in sewage. Grass and soft surfaces that have been flooded with sewage are safe to use once they have dried out and visible garbage has been picked up.

- If signs are posted relating to sewage spills, keep out of the posted area until signs are removed.
- For additional information call the Trinity County Environmental Health Department at (530) 623-1459.