

**Flood water may not be safe water**  
***Precautions for septic systems and potential sewage in 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 warm 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 1/8 teaspoon [~0.75 milliliters] of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of 1/4 teaspoon (~1.5 milliliters) 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.
- See also:
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.html>
  - [Reentering Your Flooded Home\(http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/reenter.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/reenter.html)
  - [Mold After a Disaster\(http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/)
  - [Cleaning and Sanitizing With Bleach after an Emergency\(http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/bleach.html\).](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/bleach.html)

**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.
- Have your onsite waste-water system professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage.
- 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 warm 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 1/8 teaspoon [~0.75 milliliters] of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the

water is cloudy, use solution of ¼ teaspoon (~1.5 milliliters) of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.

- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

### **SEPTIC systems:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/sanitation-wastewater/septic.html>

- CAUTION: Do not drink well water until you know it is safe. Use a safe water supply like bottled or treated water (learn how to [make water safe](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/making-water-safe.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/making-water-safe.html>)).
- Be aware that flood water may contain sewage. For more information about how to protect yourself and your family, visit CDC's [After a Hurricane or Flood: Cleanup of Flood Water](#).
- Precautions related to septic systems include:
  - Avoid contact with any septic system electrical devices until they are dry and clean.
  - Do not pump out the septic tank more than halfway or the tank may float out of the ground.
  - Reduce all nonessential water use (for example, dishwashing, washing clothes, showering).
  - Flush toilets as little as possible or use a temporary toilet.
  - If you suspect septic system damage, get the system professionally inspected and serviced. Contact your health department for a list of septic system contractors who work in your area.

### **Cleaning up floodwater:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.html>

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.

Additional resource: <http://nasdonline.org/1970/d001564/flooded-private-sewage-systems-safety-sanitation-and-clean.html>