New York State Department of Health Disaster Recovery Information

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RE-ENTERING YOUR HOME

When is it safe to reoccupy my home?

If you were ordered to evacuate your home, you must check with the mayor's office, town supervisor or local codes enforcement official before returning to your home. Even if you evacuated voluntarily, you should call the town clerk or the building department to ask about the status of buildings in your area and if there are any requirements before re-entry.

What should I look for when coming back into a home that has experienced a flood?

Floods may damage the electric, gas, plumbing and sanitary systems in your house, which may affect the indoor air quality. If you smell natural gas or sulfur odors DO NOT ENTER THE BUILDING. If what you smell is natural gas, call 911 from a safe location and wait until they allow you to enter.

When entering your home for repairs and to retrieve personal items, make a quick personal safety evaluation before entering the building. Do not use or operate any system without checking it first.

Check for

- The structure of the building – did it suffer damage?
- Electrical system damage, including high voltage and insulation
- Plumbing, septic and sewer lines
- Air conditioner, heat pump, duct work or forced hot air furnace damage

Should I have my indoor air quality tested?

No. Indoor air quality testing is not recommended.

How can I know if my air quality is OK?

Make sure your carbon monoxide detectors are working, because carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that you cannot see or smell. Every home should have a carbon monoxide detector, battery-powered or with a battery back-up.

If you hear the carbon monoxide detector alarm, get out of the building. If you smell natural gas or sulfur odors, stay out of the building and call 911.

You should have your gas, electric, and heating systems checked by a professional before turning them on.

Who can I call if I have more questions about my indoor air quality?

Call the New York State Department of Health, Center for Environmental Health, Bureau of Toxic Substance Assessment, 518-402-7810 (800-458-1158).

What precautions do I need to take to be safe when using electricity in flooded areas?

Remember, water conducts electricity. Don't run extension cords through flooded areas, use or touch electrical tools or appliances if you are standing in water, and don't enter flooded areas until you are sure that the situation does not pose an electrical shock hazard.

Water can damage electrical appliances, such as furnaces, freezers, refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, fans, dehumidifiers, etc. Electrical equipment and appliances exposed to water can be extremely hazardous if they are put in service without proper reconditioning or replacement. Ocean water and salt spray can be particularly damaging. Electrical panels that have been submerged or exposed to saltwater will need to be inspected by a qualified electrician.

If you have questions or concerns regarding electrical service contact your local utility or qualified electrician.

OIL SPILLS

What should I do if there is an oil spill in my home?

First, you need to report it. If you see, smell or suspect an oil spill or any type of petroleum release in or near your home, call the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Spill Hotline immediately at **1-800-457-7362** to report the spill.

Second, if the smell of oil is strong in your living space, the indoor air quality is probably not healthy, especially for people with respiratory or cardiovascular disease, pregnant women, young children or elderly people in the house. If you can, temporarily relocate with family or friends until the spill is cleaned up. If you can't, then take these steps to control odors:

- Keep all doors, stairways, laundry chutes, etc. between the basement and living space closed. Stairways between the basement and the first floor living space that do not have a closable door should be partitioned off with a sheet of plastic.
- Avoid tracking oil inside the home. Do not wear any shoes in the living space that may have been contaminated with oil.
- Use fans.
  - EXHAUST BASEMENT AREAS by BLOWING AIR OUT of basement through a single window, with no other basement windows open. If the only opening to the outdoors is a walkout basement door, then a large fan should be placed in the doorway, blowing out. If possible, block or reduce the open space around fans (shroud) to increase the fan's effectiveness. Any windows near the basement exhaust air should be kept closed to prevent contaminated air from re-entering the home.
  - FANS USED IN THE LIVING SPACE should BLOW OUTDOOR AIR IN.
  - Use caution when operating central heating or central air conditioning systems as these could further distribute odors and possibly spread oil into the system.

In some cases, emergency relocation funding is available if oil odors persist after recovery from the flood effects. In New York State, oil tank owners may be legally responsible for costs

associated with oil spill cleanups, so if your oil tank was the source of the spill, you would not be eligible for relocation assistance. **If your home was affected by an oil spill from a source other than your own oil tank or if you are a renter, you may be eligible for relocation assistance. For more information, contact the New York State Department of Health at (518) 402-7810 or 1-800 458-1158.**

What do I do if there is a mixture of oil and water inside my building?

Remove the oil before pumping the water out. For an oil film, absorbent pads may be sufficient to collect the oil. You can get these pads through an environmental cleanup contractor or some automotive supply stores. For a thicker layer of oil, a vacuum truck may be necessary to skim the oil off the water. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation can help you coordinate this work and obtain the needed supplies. Call their spill hotline at 1-800-457-7362.
If you absorb the oil before removing the water from the building, it can cut down on the amount of oil spread on walls and floors and the amount of other damage to your property.

DO NOT pump the water into your yard before removing the oil. The oil may spread and contaminate other areas including nearby wells, water bodies and homes.

How do I control odors from an oil spill?

Take these steps to control odors:

- Keep all doors, stairways, laundry chutes, etc. between the basement and living space closed. Stairways between the basement and the first floor living space that do not have a closable door should be partitioned off with a sheet of plastic and taped.
- Avoid tracking oil inside the home. Do not wear any shoes in the living space that may have been contaminated with oil.
- Use fans.
  - EXHAUST BASEMENT AREAS by BLOWING AIR OUT of basement through a single window, with no other basement windows open. If the only opening to the outdoors is a walkout basement door, then a large fan should be placed in the doorway, blowing out. If possible, block or reduce the open space around fans to increase the fan's effectiveness. Any windows near the basement exhaust air should be kept closed to prevent contaminated air from re-entering the home.
  - FANS USED IN THE LIVING SPACE should BLOW OUTDOOR AIR IN.
  - Use caution when operating central heating or central air conditioning systems as these could further distribute odors and possibly spread oil into the system.

How do I clean oil-coated belongings, debris and building materials?

- Hard-surfaces such as glass and metal can be cleaned with detergents or other cleaners. You can clean most walls, floors, closets and shelves.
- Some oil-coated materials are difficult to clean. Porous materials such as wood, boxes, fabrics, sheetrock or insulation will most likely need to be discarded. Take them outside. Stockpile them on plastic and cover with plastic.

- Use cat litter or other absorbent materials available at home improvement stores to absorb any remaining oil.
- Check with a professional cleaning company for information on cleaning or deodorizing household furnishings.

How do I dispose of oil-contaminated debris?

- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will help you find a nearby disposal site or tell you about a waste pickup scheduled for your area. More detailed information is available at www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/8751.html
- If you have a question about how to dispose of oil contaminated debris or hazardous waste from a home, call the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation at 518-402-8678.
- If you have a question about how to dispose of waste from places other than your house, call the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation at 518-402-8792.

When can I restart furnaces and boilers?

Oil-fired furnaces or boilers should not be started until they have been checked by a service technician. The danger is that a furnace or boiler could give off dangerous gases, including carbon monoxide, which can be deadly and must be vented. If a furnace or boiler is damaged, gases may be released in your home. Be sure all vents around tanks and all flue vents are not blocked so that gases can exhaust freely.

Submersion or prolonged exposure to salt water can increase the potential for corrosion. In addition to damage by the storm and flooding, above and below ground storage tanks containing bulk liquids (fuel oil/kerosene) along the coast are susceptible to corrosion by saltwater and should be inspected accordingly. Leakage could contaminate ecosystems and drinking water and be costly to clean up.

What about my drinking water well after an oil spill?

If your well has been contaminated by oil, you will probably smell it in the water. You may also see an oily sheen on the water flooding the well, in the tap water, or in run-off of oil to a well. There may be other ways you know or suspect that oil has contaminated your well. If you think this is the case, do not drink the water.

Notify the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (1-800-457-7362) and/or New York State Department of Health (518-402-7650).

What are the potential health effects of heating oil and petroleum?

If there are oil odors in your house, then the indoor air quality is not healthy and it is best to minimize your exposure. If you are experiencing health effects, you should contact your physician or get medical help.

Short-term exposure: People who breathe in high levels of oil and petroleum for short periods of time can experience health effects on the nervous and respiratory systems, such as nausea, increased blood pressure, eye irritation, headaches, light-headedness, and poor coordination.
Longer term exposure: Similar effects to above as well as possible effects on the blood, liver and kidneys.
Individual sensitivities: Some people may see skin irritation or blistering if they come in contact with oil and petroleum products. The elderly, the very young, and people with respiratory diseases may be especially sensitive to the effects of breathing in petroleum vapors.

Where can I get additional information about oil spills and flooding?
"Residential Oil Spills and Flooding" factsheet:
http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/indoors/air/oil_spill_flood.htm

CLEANING UP A HOME AFTER A FLOOD

Should I be concerned about health effects from flood water?

Flood waters may contain substances that are harmful to health. It may contain germs (e.g., bacteria, viruses) and chemicals that could make you sick. Take these precautions:

- If you have open cuts or sores, try not to contact flood water.
- If you are exposed to flood water, keep your skin, especially any cuts or sores, as clean as possible by washing with soap and disinfected or boiled water. Apply antibiotic ointment and cover with a sterile bandage to reduce the risk of infection.
- If you have deep cuts and/or puncture wounds and have not had a tetanus vaccination within the past 10 years or are unsure if you have, get a tetanus booster.

How should my home and belongings be cleaned after flood waters have receded?

- Porous, water-damaged materials and furnishings that cannot easily be cleaned (for example, in a washing machine) should be discarded.
- Hard, non-porous surfaces can be cleaned with non-abrasive household cleaning products mixed with water. Examples include liquid or powdered kitchen cleaners, or liquid dish or hand soap.
- If you are under a boil water alert or there is a problem with your tap water, then you first have to disinfect the water you are using for cleaning. Add one cup of unscented bleach to five gallons of water.
- Do not use ammonia or ammonia products with water that has been disinfected with bleach, as this can create hazardous fumes. Always be careful when using household cleaners or disinfectant products. Read and follow all label directions and warning labels before mixing any products.
- Be sure to thoroughly disinfect all surfaces that come in contact with food and children's play areas. You can disinfect with a solution of three tablespoons of bleach to one gallon of water (or, one cup to five gallons).

What type of disinfecting solutions or cleaners should I use?

For cleaning surfaces such as wooden furniture, hard flooring, plastic items, etc., household cleaning products such as non-abrasive liquid or powdered kitchen cleaners or liquid dish soap mixed with water are fine.

Surfaces that have been in contact with sewage should first be cleaned and then disinfected with a solution of one cup unscented bleach to five gallons of water.

If you are under a boil water order or there is a problem with your tap water, then you first have to disinfect the water you are using for cleaning. Add one cup of unscented bleach to five gallons of water. Do not use ammonia or ammonia products with water that has been disinfected with bleach, as this can create hazardous fumes. Always be careful when using household cleaners or disinfectant products. Read and follow all label directions and warning labels before mixing any products.

How do I clean items that were soaked with salt water?

You can remove salt water by cleaning with soap, rinsing with fresh water, and then air drying the items. However, additional care should be taken if you think the salt water also contained oil or sanitary waste. The question above talks about general disinfection and a question in the oil spill section covers cleaning oil-coated belongings, debris and building materials.

Do I need to use a dust mask to clean up my house or business and when do I need one that contains a carbon filter?

When materials are still wet or moist, a dust mask may not be needed. Dust masks are useful when sediments have dried out and cleanup of sediments or other house materials are creating an airborne dust hazard. For this work, look for a dust mask labeled N95 at the hardware store.

If there are organic vapors present, such as fuel oil or gasoline, and ventilation alone is not enough to reduce the vapor levels, a respirator containing an activated carbon filter is useful. You can buy these at the hardware store. Dust masks will not remove organic vapors.

Should I wear protective clothing when cleaning up after a flood?

Yes, you should wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, long-sleeve shirts and long pants when using cleaning products or disinfectants and when handling contaminated furnishings or building materials.

When doing work that could create dust or flying debris (such as tear-out or removing damaged or contaminated building materials), wear eye protection and a dust mask (look for a mask labeled N95 at the hardware store). N95 dust masks do not need any special fitting. A tight-fitting cloth mask is not a substitute for an N95 mask.

What should I do if there is sewage contamination in or around my home after flood waters recede?

- Sewage (human or animal solid waste) contains bacteria and viruses that could cause illness. To clean an area contaminated with sewage, wear rubber boots and gloves, long-sleeve shirts and long pants.
- If debris contaminated with sewage has dried out, you may need to wear a special dust mask (look for one labeled N95 at the hardware store) while cleaning to reduce exposure to airborne dust. N95 dust masks do not need any special fitting. A tight-fitting cloth mask is not a substitute for an N95 mask.
- Discard any items that are damaged by contaminated water and cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected.
- Be sure to wash your hands frequently with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected.

Should I be concerned about exposure to lead paint during cleanup?

For homes built before 1978, lead paint may be present in the home. When you are fixing up the house after a flood you may be disturbing that lead-based paint, which could cause lead exposure. Use safe work practices to avoid exposure to lead paint when removing walls, windows, and doors. See booklet Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/rrpamph.pdf

Should I be concerned about asbestos exposure if my home was flooded?

If you think asbestos may be in your home, don't panic. Usually the best thing is to leave asbestos material that is in good condition alone. Generally, material that has not been significantly damaged and is still intact will present a minimal hazard.

Asbestos is a hazard when it gets into the air and you can breathe it in. Asbestos particles are very small – you can only see them with a microscope.

Until the 1970s and 80s, many types of building products and insulation materials used in homes contained asbestos (sometimes there are markings on the material or its packaging indicating it is asbestos). Although use has declined, there are still some materials/products made today that contain asbestos. You may find asbestos in insulation, vermiculite, textured paint and patching compounds, vinyl floor tiles and the backing on vinyl sheet, flooring and adhesives, pipe insulation, furnaces and gaskets. If these materials were damaged in some way during flooding, they could release asbestos fibers.

These publications have more information about where asbestos may be found in the home:
http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/ashome.html
http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/emergency/natural/floods/asbestos/asbestos.pdf

If you must repair or remove any damaged asbestos-containing material, it is best to consult a specially trained asbestos-removal contractor. The New York State Department of Labor website

provides a list of licensed Asbestos Abatement contractors by name and zip code. http://www.labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/Active%20Asbestos%20Contractor%20List.shtm

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection maintains a listing of Certified Asbestos Investigators, Contractors and Firms in the New York City area.http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/air_and_noise/airfirms_wide.shtml

You can only know for sure if material contains asbestos by testing. To find laboratories certified for asbestos and fibers analysis, contact the New York State Department of Health, Wadsworth Center, Environmental Laboratory Approval Program, by phone (518) 485-5570 or by email elap@health.state.ny.us.

Review general advice for cleanup up after the flood in other sections in this Q & A. Although it is possible there may be some asbestos-containing material in your home as listed above, remember that removing water-damaged materials and drying out the home as quickly as possible are the keys to prevent mold growth after a flood. Porous materials that absorb water (e.g. drywall, carpeting, upholstered furniture and ceiling tiles) that were saturated by flood water probably need to be discarded. If you can't dry it quickly, throw it away.

I think I have some asbestos-containing material that needs to be removed and I have been unable to get a licensed contractor to help. What should I do?

We recommend that only licensed asbestos abatement contractors handle asbestos-containing material. They will have all the proper equipment and take the necessary precautions. If you are planning to do it yourself, follow these guidelines to reduce exposure to hazardous materials:

- If the amount of potential asbestos-damaged material is relatively small, and still flood-soaked, you can place the wet material in 6 mil plastic bags or wrap it in layers of plastic sheeting and seal with adhesive tape. When wet, the fibers are not “friable” (meaning the asbestos fibers will not be released into the air).
- In handling materials that are believed to be contaminated with asbestos it is recommended that, at a minimum, you wear personal protective equipment such as disposable coveralls, gloves, goggles, and most importantly, some form of respiratory protection. A basic dust mask or the N95 dust mask recommended for general cleanup is not protective for asbestos fibers.
- If materials have dried, wet them down. Avoid activities that will generate dust, such as sweeping or vacuuming debris that may contain asbestos.
- If you have a HEPA vacuum, use it. It is the preferred method of vacuuming debris that might contain asbestos fibers.
- Wrap in plastic and then dispose of any soiled/contaminated clothing. This clothing should not be washed and should be kept separate from other any family member’s clothing. Wash/shower after handling asbestos containing materials.
- Place all wet materials in 6 mil plastic bags. Standard garbage bags are not thick enough. Use contractor grade, industrial grade or heavy duty garbage bags. Clearly

label the bags to indicate the presence of asbestos. Dispose of the asbestos-containing material at a licensed asbestos waste disposal site in your area.

What should I do with garbage from my house?

Store any garbage in watertight, rodent/insect-proof containers with tight-fitting covers. Use plastic liners if available. Put garbage in an outdoor location but not near your well. Local authorities will tell you where and when collection of garbage from the flood will occur.

Can the flooding cause problems with rodents, insects and other pests?

Floodwaters could displace rats, mice and insect pests from their normal locations in the city. Because of this, they may seek shelter, food and water in dwellings and other places that people occupy. The following advice can help keep rodents and insect pests out of your building:

- Keep property clear of brush, litter and debris that can be used as a home or hiding place by pests;
- Store garbage and spoiled food in covered metal or heavy-duty plastic trash containers so that pests are not attracted to it or use it as a food source;
- Seal or repair cracks, holes, gaps in walls, doors, windows, and other possible entry points, to keep pests out; and
- Drain standing water and repair leaks in hoses and faucets that could serve as a water source for pests.

What precautions do I need to take when using electricity in flooded areas?

Remember, water conducts electricity. Don't run extension cords through flooded areas, use or touch electrical tools or appliances if you are standing in water, and don't enter flooded areas until you are sure that the situation does not pose an electrical shock hazard.

Water can damage electrical appliances, such as furnaces, freezers, refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, fans, dehumidifiers, etc. Electrical equipment and appliances exposed to water can be extremely hazardous if they are put in service without proper reconditioning or replacement. Ocean water and salt spray can be particularly damaging. Electrical panels that have been submerged or exposed to saltwater will need to be inspected by a qualified electrician.

If you have questions or concerns regarding electrical service contact your local utility or qualified electrician.

Can I salvage wood shelves, wood cabinets or other pieces of wood furniture that were in contact with flood water?

Yes, you can salvage wooden items such as shelves, work tables, cabinets and other pieces of furniture, but you need to clean and dry them properly.

- Clean dirt on the surfaces directly impacted by flood waters with a rag moistened with a household cleaning product such as non-abrasive liquid, powdered kitchen cleaners or liquid dish soap mixed with water. If the wood has a finish, then wipe the cleaned surfaces with a cloth moistened with wood cleaning oil.
- After cleaning, dry wooden items in a warm dry area out of the sun. Direct sunlight will cause uneven drying and shrinkage resulting in more damage.
- Don't force stuck doors or drawers; give them time to shrink back to their normal positions as they dry.
- Some items such as chair legs may come apart or veneer may peel away from dressers or tables. If you are interested in salvaging these items, keep the pieces as they can be re-glued after drying.

Can I salvage wood paneling?

If the paneling is on an insulated wall, it should be removed along with wet insulation so the wall framing can dry properly. Paneling that is removed can be cleaned, dried and reused if it is not too damaged (such as being very warped or delaminated).

If the paneling is on a wall that is not insulated, you may be able to salvage it in place if it is in an area that can be dried out quickly. Pry out the bottom of panels and wedge open with a 2 x4 to promote air circulation.

After cleaning up flood damage, when is wood framing dry enough to reinstall insulation and finished wall treatments such as sheetrock?

Following Hurricane Katrina, FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) provided this guidance: flood wetted materials can be presumed dry when their moisture content readings are 15% or less. FEMA recommends pin type moisture meters. These meters use pins to penetrate solid wood, providing the most accurate measure of moisture content. You can buy pin type moisture meters for $150 to $300, or your local codes enforcement official or Cornell Cooperative Extension office may have one you can use. Whether you or a contractor is doing the work, make sure the wood framing is adequately dry before moving forward.

Can I salvage a wooden baby crib and baby furniture? What about baby clothes in rubber bins (bins touched the water but contents inside stayed dry)? How should I clean the contents for the baby's room?

- Baby clothes that stayed dry in plastic bins are fine. The outside of the bins can be cleaned with rags moistened with household cleaning products such as non-abrasive liquid or powdered kitchen cleaners or liquid dish or hand soap mixed with water. You can clean plastic, ceramic, and other hard non-porous surfaces in this way.
- If the mattress got wet and absorbed water, it should be discarded. If the mattress is "waterproof" but you cannot unzip the outside cover and check that the cushion material is completely dry, you should discard it.
- Baby clothes, bedding, stuffed animals or other items that got wet and can be put in a washing machine, should get laundered. Any other items in the room that were porous

(absorbed water) or cannot be dried quickly should be discarded. Hard, non-porous items that show signs of mold can be cleaned with soap and water.

- For baby cribs and furniture, follow these steps:
    - Clean cribs and furniture with household cleaning products such as non-abrasive liquid or powdered kitchen cleaners or liquid dish soap mixed with water.
    - Because babies may mouth or come in contact with crib surfaces, after cleaning, they should also be disinfected. Spray or wipe down surfaces with a solution of three tablespoons of unscented bleach mixed with one gallon of water (or one cup of bleach in five gallons of water).
    - Always be careful when using household cleaners or disinfectant products. Read and follow all label directions and warning labels before mixing any products. Mixing some products can create hazardous fumes. For example, never mix products containing ammonia and bleach.

Can I save my Christmas or other holiday decorations?

It depends on how quickly you can dry them out and how easy they are to clean. For example, tinsel and paper items that were flooded should probably be discarded. Flood damaged electric lights should be discarded unless they were kept dry inside containers. If items were boxed and the inside is clean and you can clean and dry the outside surfaces, then they are probably fine. Glass ornaments can be cleaned with soap and water. Wood ornaments should be wiped clean with a rag moistened with detergent and water. If they have a finish, they should then be wiped with wood cleaning oil and dried in a warm area out of the sun.

If the furnace was submerged, can I test the furnace to see if it runs?

No. Contact a professional to check the system prior to operating.

How do I clean duct work that was flooded?

You can clean ductwork and components directly impacted by floodwater. Take the ductwork and components apart, clean with detergent, rinse and reassemble. Any porous components of a ventilation system, such as filters and insulation, should be disposed of and replaced.

What about the areas in my house that were not flooded or did not get wet? Do items in those rooms need to be cleaned?

Items that were not flooded or did not get wet do not need any special cleaning or handling. If you are fixing up other parts of your house that were flooded, try to contain dust in those construction areas and cover items in unaffected areas if possible to reduce the need for additional cleaning afterward.

MOLD

What should I do to prevent mold growth?

Removing water-damaged materials and drying out the home as quickly as possible are the keys to preventing mold growth after a flood.

- Promptly remove standing water and all porous wet materials such as carpeting, saturated wallboard (sheetrock) and upholstered furniture from the home.
- Aggressively air out the home to reduce moisture by opening windows and using fans, if available.
- Dehumidifiers are useful in enclosed areas or when windows need to be closed because of rain or high humidity.

How do I know if there is a mold problem?

Mold can usually be seen or smelled. Mold may appear as slightly furry, discolored, or slimy patches that increase in size as they grow. Molds also produce a musty odor that may be the first indication it is present. The best way to find mold is to look for visible signs of mold growth or water staining, or follow your nose to the source of the odor. After flood waters recede you should check often for new mold growth or signs of moisture that may indicate the need for cleanup, home repair, or removal of affected materials.

Is it safe to stay in a home with mold growth present?

Exposure to mold can cause health effects in some people. Indoor mold growth does not affect everyone, but people who are sensitive to molds should avoid areas with active mold growth until they can be cleaned or removed. The most common effects are allergic responses (such as hay fever, asthma, or irritation of the eyes, nose, throat or lungs) from breathing mold spores.

The goal is to dry homes as quickly as possible and remove wet furnishings and building materials. This will prevent mold growth. If extensive mold growth does develop, it should be cleaned or taken care of as quickly as possible.

Can mold in the home be cleaned up?

Yes, in some cases, but not all. Porous materials that absorb water (e.g. drywall, carpeting, upholstered furniture and ceiling tiles) and were saturated by flood water probably need to be discarded. If you can't dry it quickly, throw it away.

The following items need to be thrown away when you can see or smell mold and/or the materials have been under water:

- Carpet, carpet padding and rugs
- Upholstered furniture, mattresses and box springs
- Computers, microwaves, window A/C units and other electronics/appliances that had fans and were housed in moldy rooms

- Papers and books
- Fiberboard, insulation and disposable filters in your heating/cooling system.

For other items or areas, follow these steps:

- In small areas, mold can be cleaned on hard surfaces, such as wood or concrete, by scrubbing the area with a cleaning rag or brush wetted with diluted detergent.
- Rubber gloves and a dust mask (look for one labeled N95 at the hardware store) can be used to minimize direct exposure to contaminants and cleaning products.
- Be careful when using household cleaners or disinfectant products. Read and follow all label directions and warning labels before mixing any products. Mixing some products can create hazardous fumes. For example, never mix products containing ammonia and bleach.
- Individuals with known mold allergies or asthma should not clean or remove mold, as their conditions may be aggravated.
- An experienced professional should be hired to clean up a large mold problem, or if you are highly sensitive to mold.

Does the State have a list of professional mold contractors?

New York does not certify or license building contractors, including mold contractors. If you hire a contractor to work on your flooded home and your home was built before 1978, check whether the contractor complies with the current Environmental Protection Agency lead paint rules, and (if you have asbestos) whether they are a licensed New York asbestos contractor. If the contractor follows the requirements for lead paint and asbestos cleanup then they will also prevent the spread of mold and dust in your home.

If there is mold present in my furnishings or other belongings can they be cleaned?

In general, moldy, porous items (items that absorb water) cannot be adequately cleaned and should not be saved.

The following items need to be thrown away when you can see or smell mold and/or the materials have been under water:

- Carpet, carpet padding and rugs
- Upholstered furniture, mattresses and box springs
- Computers, microwaves, window air conditioning units and other electronics and appliances that have fans and were housed in moldy rooms
- Papers and books
- Fiberboard, insulation and disposable filters in your heating/cooling system**.**

Items that can typically be cleaned and kept include:

- Nonporous items like china, glass, jewelry, porcelain and metal
- All-wood furniture with mold growth but otherwise in good condition

- Some electronics and small appliances (depends on flooding conditions)
- Photographs, books and valuable or important legal documents with minor levels of mold growth
- Artwork, textiles, clothing that are not physically damaged

How soon after the flood waters recede should items be dried out or thrown away?

The quicker you can dry things out, the better; preferably within 2-3 days. After that, items may be more likely to grow mold and are more difficult to save.

Should I test the air in my home for mold?

No. Air testing for mold is not useful because some mold spores are always present in the air. Mold only becomes a problem indoors when surfaces become wet and molds start to actively grow on the surfaces. Active mold growth can be directly observed, either because it is visible or because of the moldy smell it produces. Since you can see or smell mold, there is no need to test.

FLOODED HOME GARDENS AND CROP FIELDS

Should I eat the produce from my flooded garden?

Probably not. Flood water could be contaminated with raw (untreated) sewage, farm run-off, fuel oil from ruptured fuel oil tanks, industrial contaminants, and germs (such as bacteria and viruses) that are naturally present in the river/creek/lake water. To avoid health risks, it is best to discard ready-to-harvest produce that has come in contact with flood waters.

Can any of my homegrown produce be salvaged?

If you wish to salvage some crops:

- Do not eat any raw (uncooked) produce. If it cannot be thoroughly cooked, discard it.
- Discard leafy greens (e.g., lettuce, spinach), even if you are planning on cooking them, because they are difficult to clean well.

My vegetable garden flooded some months ago. Is it OK for me to grow fruits and vegetables in my garden in the next growing season?

According to the US Food and Drug Administration, specialists recommend a period of 30 to 60 days between flooding and planting and/or soil testing before planting. With the passage of time, anything deposited on the soil has been exposed to sunlight, rain, air, and other conditions. This reduces concerns related to microorganisms (for example, bacteria and viruses), which may have been present in the flood water and in the sediment left behind.

Any chemical substances in the flood water were probably diluted and at low levels. Chemicals such as gasoline and fuel oil that might have been released during flooding events are further reduced by sunlight, rain, air, and other conditions. In general, if you do not see signs of chemical contamination, such as staining or sheens, distressed vegetation, or notice chemical odors, then chemical contamination is not likely to be a concern.

My garden flooded some months ago. Should I have my soil tested before I plant fruits and vegetables in the spring?

In general, if you do not see signs of chemical contamination, such as staining or sheens, distressed vegetation, or notice chemical odors, then chemical contamination is not likely to be a concern.

If you think your planting area may contain high levels of chemicals, the only way to know for sure is to test the soil through a certified laboratory. However, this can be expensive and the test results can be hard to interpret, so it is better to avoid planting in those areas.

If you choose to test your soil, you can find a commercial laboratory certified for 'solid and hazardous waste' at the NYSDOH certification program's website at: www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/elap.html

Where can I get additional information about gardens?

Fact sheet from University of Wisconsin Extension, "Safely Using Produce from Flooded Gardens" http://outagamie.uwex.edu/files/2010/09/Safely-Using-Produce-from-Flooded-Gardens.pdf

For more general information for gardeners the "Healthy Gardening" factsheet: http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1301/index.htm

My farmland flooded. Can I grow crops on my farmlandl this upcoming season?

According to the US Food and Drug Administration, specialists recommend a period of 30 to 60 days between flooding and planting and/or soil testing before planting. Both microorganisms, (such as bacteria and viruses) and chemicals (such as gasoline and fuel oil) that may have deposited on soil from flooding are reduced by sunlight, rain, air, and other conditions. In general, if you do not see signs of chemical contamination, such as staining or sheens, distressed vegetation, or notice chemical odors, then chemical contamination is not likely to be a concern.

If you think your planting area may contain high levels of chemicals, the only way to know for sure is to test the soil through a certified laboratory. However, this can be expensive and the test results can be hard to interpret, so it is better to avoid planting in those areas.

If you choose to test your soil, you can find a commercial laboratory certified for 'solid and hazardous waste' at the NYSDOH certification program's website at: www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/elap.html

For additional advice related to planting food crops on flood affected properties and soil testing, the US Food and Drug Administration offers guidance available at http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/FoodDefenseandEmergencyResponse/ucm274683.htm

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets regulates the agriculture industry and can be reached at 1-800-554-4501 or on the web at http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/TheDepartment.html

FLOODED SEPTIC SYSTEMS

What should I do if my septic system was flooded or damaged?

Don't use the system if the soil around the system is wet and flooded. The wastewater will not be treated and will become a source of pollution.

Once floodwaters have receded, there are several things homeowners should do:

- Conserve water as much as possible while the system dries out and restores itself and the water table falls.
- Have your septic system, including the septic tank and any electrical connections, pumps and equipment, professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage. Signs of damage include soil erosion on or around the drainfield, drainage through the plumbing is sluggish, and back-up of sewage into the basement.
- Only trained specialists should clean or repair septic tanks because tanks may contain dangerous gases. Contact your health department for a list of septic system contractors who work in your area. You can find the listing of the environmental program at this web address http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/doh_pub_contacts_map.htm
- Do not pump the septic tank during flooded or saturated drainfield conditions. At best, pumping the tank is only a temporary solution. Pumping it out could cause the tank to float out of the ground and may damage the inlet and outlet pipes.
- Do not dig or construct around the septic tank and drainfield while the soil is still wet or flooded.
- Do not compact the soil over the drainfield by driving or operating equipment in the area.
- If sewage has backed up into the basement, clean the area and disinfect the floor (see p. 6 for information on cleaning and disinfecting surfaces).
- Contact your local health department (see last page) for advice.

Where can I get additional information about flooded septic systems?
http://water.epa.gov/aboutow/ogwdw/upload/2005_09_22_faq_fs_whattodoafteraflood_septic_eng.pdf

DISINFECTING DRINKING WATER WELLS

What if my well was flooded?

If the area around your well was flooded (including by sea or brackish water), ASSESS, FLUSH FLOODWATERS FROM THE WELL, REPAIR, DISINFECT, then FLUSH the well again (see steps below for more detail). The water should be tested to determine whether it is safe for drinking. If, after following these steps, the well water tastes salty or has a chemical or gas/oil taste or appearance or if you still have concerns, contact your local health department (see last page) (LHD) or a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) registered well driller *(contact your local DEC Region office for registered well driller information). See the other* questions in this section to learn how to disinfect the well and locate the name of a certified laboratory to test the water.

When should the well water be tested?

Before you test the water, make sure:

- All flood waters around the well have drained and the well area has been cleaned up.
- Any needed repairs have been completed. Some damage may need to be repaired by a qualified professional.
- The well is in good condition and operable.
- All flood water has been flushed from the well, and the well and all household plumbing has been properly disinfected (see #35, "Disinfecting Drinking Water Wells"). Flushed well water needs to be discharged as far away as possible from the well so as not to recycle back into the well. For more information on flushing and discharges contact your Local Health Department (see last page).
- After disinfection, the well has been flushed to remove chlorinated water. Wait seven to ten days to make sure that all chlorine is out of the system. Flushed water needs to be discharged as far away as possible from the well so as not to recycle back into the well. For more information on flushing and discharges contact your Local Health Department (see last page).

After you have made any needed repairs and disinfected the well, your water is ready to be tested. Until testing shows that the water is free of contamination, continue to use bottled or boiled water for drinking and food preparation.

What should the water be tested for?

The water should be tested for total coliform bacteria. Total coliform counts give a general indication of the sanitary condition of a water supply. If total coliform are present, the laboratory follows-up with a test for E-coli. E-coli indicates that there is contamination from sewage or other source of feces. If you suspect other contaminants (such as oil, pesticides or fertilizers), testing for these may also be needed. Contact your local health department (see last page) for advice. You can find that number in the blue pages of your phone book, or at

http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/water/drinking/doh_pub_contacts_map.htm

Who should do the water testing?

A laboratory approved to test potable (drinking) water in New York State should do the test. A list of these laboratories can be found at http://www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/comm.html.

How should I collect a water sample to have my well water tested?

Contact a certified laboratory of your choice
http://www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/comm.html
to get a certified sample bottle and sampling instructions. Follow sampling instructions provided by the laboratory.

If you did not receive instructions from the laboratory, do the following:

- The bottle you got from the lab is sterile.
    - Do not open the bottle until you are ready to fill it.
    - Do not rinse the contents from bottle.
    - Do not touch the inside of the bottle or the bottle cap with your fingers.
- Before taking the sample:
    - Use a faucet that has separate hot and cold water handles or that can be adjusted to provide just cold water.
    - If the faucet tip has a wire screen aerators, remove it and any rubber gaskets from the faucet.
    - Disinfect the faucet tip with chlorine bleach (use bleach cap to bring bleach to the faucet tip); or by "flaming" the faucet tip with a lighter or match for 10 seconds (be sure to remove rubber faucet seals first).
- To take the sample:
    - Let the cold water run for 4 - 5 minutes.
    - Fill the bottle with cold water to the indicated fill line and cap it tightly.
    - Close the bottle immediately once it is filled with water from your tap.

For other types of contamination (such as oil, fertilizer or pesticides) a professional may need to collect the sample. Contact the laboratory to check on this.

What should I do with the sample?

Fill out the sample label and form provided by the lab. Place the bottle in a clean cooler or other container with ice in a sealed plastic bag or with blue ice to keep the sample chilled. Deliver or ship the sample to your chosen laboratory within the time period specified by the laboratory.

How much does it cost to test the water for total coliform bacteria?

Cost for the test varies with laboratories, but a test for total coliform bacteria typically costs $20 to $40.

I received the test result from my water sample. What does it mean?

If the lab report says:

- "negative, absence or A" for total coliform or E-coli bacteria – the water is free of coliform or E-coli bacteria.
- "positive, presence or P" for total coliform and E-coli bacteria – the water is contaminated with coliform and E-coli bacteria.

If you have questions on interpreting the test results, or the lab report will note if other contaminants tested for are present, contact your local health department (see last page). http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/water/drinking/doh_pub_contacts_map.htm

What should I do if the water is still contaminated with bacteria after disinfecting and testing has been completed?

Contact your local health department (see last page) for advice. You can find that number at http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/water/drinking/doh_pub_contacts_map.htm

How do I disinfect my drinking water well?

You can make your household water ready to use again by disinfecting your well and household plumbing with diluted bleach, and then flushing it.

If you have internet access, you can get the directions on how to do this on page 16 of the document found at: http://www.nyhealth.gov/publications/7064.pdf or call 518-402-7650.

If you do not have internet access, you can all the NYS Department of Health at 518-402-7650 or **follow these 12 steps:**

YOU WILL NEED:

- 1 gallon of household bleach (unscented)
- A 5 gallon bucket
- Garden hose long enough to reach the well from the house
- Make sure the electricity is on and that the pump is receiving power

PROCEDURE:

1) Attach the hose to the outdoor faucet closest to the well or directly to the pressure tank faucet. If possible, bypass any water treatment equipment, such as a water softener to prevent damaging or clogging it.

2) Turn on the faucet to run water outside on the ground away from the well until the water is clear.

3) Next to the well casing, mix one (1) gallon of household bleach and enough water to fill the 5 gallon bucket or pail to dilute the bleach.

4) Turn off the faucet and turn off electrical power to the well pump.

5) Carefully remove the well cap and set aside. Place the hose inside the well casing and turn the electrical power back on and turn the faucet back on to run water into the well.

6) Carefully pour the water and bleach mixture from the bucket or pail down the open well casing while continuing to run the water from the hose into the well to recirculate the bleach and water mixture. Use the hose to also wash down the inside of the well casing and well cap.

7) After one hour, go to each indoor and outdoor faucet and run the water until a chlorine odor is present, then shut each faucet off including the faucet going to the well.

8) Turn off the power supply to pump. Remove hose from well and replace the well cap.

9) Allow the well and plumbing to stand idle for at least 8 hours but preferably 12 to 24 hours with the bleach solution in it. Avoid using the water during this time.

10) After the well has been idle for the recommended period of time, flush the bleach and water combination out of the well by turning the pump power back on and running the outdoor faucet and garden hose in an area away from grass and shrubbery until the odor of chlorine bleach disappears.

11) Run all indoor and outdoor faucets until the odor and taste of chlorine bleach disappears.

12) After the well has been properly disinfected and the chlorine bleach has been flushed out of the water system, the water should be tested. See the list below of laboratories that are certified to test drinking water. Until testing shows that the water is free of contamination, you should continue to use bottled water or disinfect the water for drinking and food preparation (by bringing the water to a full rolling boil for 1 minute before using).

LABS CERTIFIED TO TEST DRINKING WATER

Where can I get my drinking water tested to make sure it is safe to drink?

To get the latest list of commercial labs certified to test drinking water in New York State, please check http://www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/comm.html

BOIL WATER NOTICES

What is the difference between a boil water notice, a do not drink notice and a do not use notice?

- A **boil water notice** is issued for a public water supply when it is possible that drinking water has been contaminated by germs or pathogens that could cause illness. In such cases, you can kill these organisms by boiling your water for a full minute. You should use boiled or bottled water for drinking and cooking. You may also hear this referred to as a boil water order or advisory.

- If your community issues a **do not drink** notice, that means the water has probably been contaminated by chemicals, and you should not drink it at all. You can flush toilets, but for drinking and cooking use an alternate water source, such as bottled water. Boiling water does not eliminate chemicals and can actually increase exposure to those chemicals.

- If your community issues a **do not use** notice, that means you should not use the water for any purpose, including flushing toilets and bathing. Do not use advisories are rare, and may be issued when water contact with the skin, lungs, or eyes can be dangerous.

Make sure you understand and follow the instructions with any kind of drinking water notice in your area, and keep listening for updates from your local officials. For more detailed information on how to protect yourself and your family, see http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/boilwater/

Is my drinking water under a boil water notice?

Response for private wells

If your home gets its water from a private, individual well, then the boil water notices that are issued by public water systems do not apply to you. But this does not necessarily mean that your water is safe to drink. If your well was covered or even just surrounded by flood water, then there is a very good chance that your water is contaminated by waterborne germs. Disinfect your well (see page 16) and get the water tested (see page 17 for a list of certified labs).

Response for public water service

To know for sure you need to know which public water system serves your residence. You can find this out by looking for the phone number on your water bill, or calling the local town or village.

If you do not have internet service, there are some places that you can call to find out. The first place would be your drinking water supplier. Their phone number is normally printed on your water bills. You can also call the local health department office that oversees your drinking water supplier. You can find local health department information at http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/water/drinking/doh_pub_contacts_map.htm

How do I protect my family when my water needs to be boiled?

Basically, just bring water to a **FULL ROLLING BOIL for 1 MINUTE**. There is no need to boil it longer. Then allow the water to COOL BEFORE USE. Because water may take a while to cool, plan ahead. Make up a batch of boiled water in advance so you will not be tempted to use it hot and risk scalds or burns.

You need to think about all the other ways that you use water, and all the ways that water can get into peoples bodies. There is a lot of information available to help you meet your needs to drink, cook, bathe, make infant formula, wash, feed your pets, and all the other uses we have for our drinking water. If you have internet service, we recommend you visit http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/water/drinking/boilwater/

Where can I get more information about boil water notices?

For basic boil water facts see the fact sheet "Basic Information for All Consumers". Detailed information for other consumers, such as food service establishments, is available from the NYS Department of Health or your local Health Department. If a "Do Not Use" notice is issued, additional precautions will be needed, contact your water supplier or local health department for guidance.

Can I use my water for cooking?

If a boil water notice was issued for your drinking water, any water used for food preparation or cooking should be boiled first or be from an acceptable alternate source (bottled water, water from another public water supply, water from a tanker provided by an emergency response agency, and water delivered by a NY State certified bulk water provider).

Bring the water to a full rolling boil for at least one minute before adding the food item, like when you make pasta.

How should I wash fruit and vegetables and make ice?

Fruits, vegetables, and any other foods that will not be cooked should be washed and rinsed with boiled (and then cooled) water or water from an acceptable alternate source. Similarly, ice should be made with either boiled water or water from an acceptable alternate source.

Can I use my water for making baby formula or drinks?

No, not without precautions! Any water used for baby food, formula, or making beverages must be boiled (and then cooled!) or be from an acceptable alternate source.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes?

You should not use potentially contaminated water for anything having to do with the preparation or eating of food. Therefore, it is not a good idea to use potentially contaminated water to hand wash dishes. You can:

- Use boiled (then cooled) water, or
- Use water from an alternate source, or
- Use your water, but after washing with dish detergent, rinse for a minute in a mixture of 1 tablespoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water. Allow dishes, cutlery, cups, etc. to completely air dry before use.

You can use your home dishwasher if you know that the hot wash is at least 170 degrees F and includes a full dry cycle. However, most home dishwashers do not reach this temperature. If you are uncertain of the temperature of your dishwasher, wash your dishes by hand using one of the three steps listed above.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing clothes?

Yes, it is safe to wash clothes as long as they are completely dried before being worn. However, the stirring up of water and cloudiness that may occur during a boil water event may discolor clothing.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?

The water may be used by healthy individuals for showering, bathing, shaving, and washing as long as care is taken not to swallow water and avoid shaving nicks. People with open wounds, cuts, blisters or recent surgical wounds and people who have compromised immune systems, (including those who are getting cancer treatments or have AIDS) or suffer from chronic illness should use boiled water (then cooled) or water from an acceptable alternate source. Children and disabled individuals should be supervised to ensure water is not swallowed. Sponge bathing is advisable, and bathing time should be minimized to further reduce the potential for swallowing.

Can I brush my teeth with the water without boiling it?

No! Any water you swallow or place in your mouth should be disinfected by boiling (and then cooled) or come from an acceptable alternate source.

How should I wash my hands during a boil water notice/order?

Generally, vigorous washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. If you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled (then cooled) water, bottled water, or water from another acceptable source.

Can I use hand sanitizing lotion or wipes?

Hand sanitizing wipes alone are not enough, especially to clean your hands for making food. Alcohol based sanitizers work against some common germs (like *E. coli*, and *Salmonella*) but may not be effective for all.

What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?

Illness is possible, especially for people that already have a chronic illness or may have compromised immune systems, for example, from AIDS or cancer treatments. This is why boil water notices are issued. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramps should seek medical attention. These symptoms (with or without fever) are not always due to contaminated water and a doctor's assessment and medical testing are key to identifying the cause of illness.

What should I do when the boil water notice is lifted?

If you are on a private well, the boil water notice does not apply to you. If your public water was on a boil water notice, do the following:

- Flush household pipes/faucets first: run all your cold water faucets on full for at least five minutes each. If your service connection is long or complex (like in an apartment building) consider flushing for a longer period. Your building superintendent or landlord should be able to advise you on longer flushing times.
- Automatic ice makers: dump existing ice and flush by making and discarding three batches of ice cubes. Wipe down the ice bin with a disinfectant. If your water feed line to the machine is longer than 20 feet, increase to five batches.
- Hot water heaters, water coolers, in line filters, and other appliances with direct water connections or water tanks: run enough water to completely replace at least one full volume of all lines and tanks. If your filters are near the end of their life, replace them.
- Water softeners: run through a regeneration cycle.
- Reverse Osmosis (RO) units: replace pre filters, and check owner’s manual.
- Replace other water filters, as they are disposable and may be contaminated. This applies especially to carbon filters and others that are near the end of their life.

What is an acceptable alternate source for safe drinking water?

Good alternate water sources include bottled water, water from another public water supply, water from a tanker provided by an emergency response agency, and water delivered by a NY State certified bulk water provider. Roadside springs are not a sure source of safe drinking water.

FLOOD SEDIMENT ON OUTDOOR PROPERTIES

Should I be concerned about flood sediment on my property?

Once flood waters recede, deposits of sediment may be left behind on lawns, patios and driveways. Flood waters and sediment can contain microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses and parasites, and sometimes chemical contaminants. However, because of the large volumes of water that were present, substances that may have been in the water were probably highly diluted and at low concentrations.

Don't worry about casual contact with surfaces that were flooded, but when it comes time to clean up with raking, shoveling or otherwise kicking up dust and debris, it is best to take these precautions:

- Wear rubber boots, waterproof gloves and eye protection.
- Wear a dust mask (look for one labeled N95 at the hardware store) to help reduce the potential for inhaling dust and contaminants.
- Use a shovel to remove thick deposits of moist sediment on hard surfaces like driveways and patios. Thin layers of moist sediment or dried sediment can be hosed off to the lawn or gutter. Avoid sweeping dried sediments with a broom or using a leaf blower as this will make sediments airborne, increasing the potential for breathing the dust, getting it into your eyes or spreading it to other surfaces.
- Clean children's play equipment and toys, and outdoor surfaces that people will directly contact (such as lawn chairs and picnic tables), with detergent and clean water. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.

What if my skin comes in contact with flood water?

Skin contact with flood water and sediment does not pose a significant risk unless you have an open wound. If an open wound is exposed to flood water or sediment, wash the wound well with soap and clean water, apply antibiotic ointment, and cover with a sterile bandage. If you have a deep cut and/or puncture wounds, see a physician. If you have not had a tetanus vaccination within the past 10 years or are unsure if you have, get a tetanus booster.

Should flood sediment on my property be sampled?

In general, sampling is not necessary for outdoor surfaces such as lawns, patios and driveways. Chemicals present in flood waters are greatly diluted by the large volume of water during floods and the drying-out process will reduce the risk from microorganisms. Also, in most cases, sampling will provide little useful information. If there is an obvious source of chemical contamination such as petroleum or chemical material and odors, the Department of Environmental Conservation should be called at 1-800-457-7362 to report the spill.

How should I go about cleaning up sediment deposits?

- Wear rubber boots, waterproof gloves and eye protection.
- Wear a dust mask (look for one labeled N95 at the hardware store) to help reduce the potential for inhaling dust and contaminants.
- Use a shovel to remove thick deposits of moist sediment on hard surfaces like driveways and patios. Thin layers of moist sediment or dried sediment can be hosed off to the lawn or gutter. Avoid sweeping dried sediments with a broom or using a leaf blower as this will make sediments airborne, increasing the potential for breathing the dust, getting it into your eyes or spreading it to other surfaces.
- Clean children's play equipment and toys, and outdoor surfaces that people will directly contact (such as lawn chairs and picnic tables), with detergent and clean water. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.

Are there any measures that should be taken to clean public areas?

Public areas can generally be cleaned in the same manner as homes. However, situations should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if additional measures are appropriate. For example, apart from cleaning hard surfaces on play equipment at a public playground, the sand in sand boxes and mulch or other ground material on playgrounds may need to be removed if flood sediment impacted these areas. Officials may decide to close playgrounds until clean-up is completed. Remind people to use proper personal hygiene (such as washing hands) when public areas are open by placing signs and providing washing facilities.

What should I do if road traffic kicks up dust continually?

Sediments present on roadways after flood waters recede can create excessive dust after they dry out and normal traffic flow resumes. Try to avoid breathing the airborne dust to the best extent practical. When driving, drive slowly so you don't raise dust, keep your vehicle's windows closed, and set your car's fan on recirculate so that air from outside isn't drawn into the car.

What if I have more questions about cleaning up after a flood?

After flooding, people should follow guidance provided by the New York State Department of Health and other health agencies to protect themselves from biological, chemical, and electrical hazards as they cleanup their properties, homes, and private drinking water wells. Helpful resources and information can be obtained at: www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/emergency/flood/index.htm or by calling your local health department (see last page) or the New York State Department of Health at 518-402-7530 or 800-458-1158.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has additional more in-depth information about outdoor sites contaminated with microorganisms. This material is located on their website at: http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Guidance_Flooding.htm

WHAT TO DO WITH FOOD IN YOUR HOME AFTER A FLOOD

Should I be concerned if flood waters came in contact with my food?

Flood waters and sediment can contain microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses and parasites, and sometimes chemical contaminants. If flood waters contact food items, the food can become contaminated. Also, if the flood caused the power to go out, perishable foods in the refrigerator and freezer may become spoiled, even if they were not contacted by flood waters.

What should I do with foods that came into contact with flood water?

Nearly all foods that were contacted by flood water should be discarded. Foods that are specifically recommended to throw away include fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, cheese, dried goods and other pantry items. If in doubt, throw it out!

In addition:

- Discard food containers with lids that are screwed on or pressed on (such as condiment containers, soda and beer bottles).
- Discard home canned goods with screw tops and seals (such as pickles and jams).

Are there any foods that can be used following contact with flood waters?

Commercially processed canned goods can be used unless the cans are swollen, rusted, seriously dented, or the contents cannot be identified. However, the cans should be made usable by the following process:

- Remove labels thoroughly;
- Wash cans with dish detergent and water to remove any flood related residue;
- Disinfect cans with solution of about ¼ cup unscented household bleach per one gallon water;
- Air dry cleaned cans;
- Re-label cans with a marker or new label, including the expiration date.

What should I do with foods that were in my refrigerator?

Generally, if the power goes out, food in the refrigerator will remain cold for four to six hours if the door is not opened. The temperature in the refrigerator should be at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to keep food from spoiling. If the temperature in the refrigerator was above 40 degrees for more than two hours, many foods will need to be discarded. Foods that should be discarded include:

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry and seafood;
- Casseroles, stews and soups;
- Milk, cream, yogurt and soft cheese;
- Mayonnaise and creamy salad dressings;
- Fresh eggs and egg substitutes; and
- Cream-filled pastries, custard, puddings and gravies.

Some foods people keep in the refrigerator can also be kept at room temperature for a few days. The following foods may be usable, but should be inspected for spoilage before consuming:

- Butter, margarine and hard cheeses;
- Fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Fruit juices;
- Fruit pies;
- Vinegar-based salad dressings, relish, taco sauce, barbeque sauce, mustard, ketchup and olives; and
- Peanut butter and jelly.

What should I do with foods that were in my freezer?

Generally, if the power goes out, a full freezer will remain frozen for two days, and a half-full freezer for about a day. Foods in the freezer that still contain ice crystals are partially frozen and may be eaten or refrozen. Most foods that have completely thawed, but are still cold and have been kept cold for no longer than one or two days after thawing, may be eaten or refrozen. The following advice should be used to determine what to do with such foods from the freezer:

- Fruits can be eaten if they still smell and taste good;
- Vegetables that have been completely thawed should be discarded;
- Meat and poultry should be discarded if the color or odor is poor or questionable, or if the meat has been warmer than 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours;
- Fish and shellfish should not be eaten or refrozen if they have been completely thawed;
- Frozen dinners should be kept refrigerated and cooked as soon as possible; and
- Ice cream should be discarded.

What should I do with my dishes, utensils and cookware?

Clean dishes, utensils and cookware with soap and water. Then disinfect dishes, utensils and cookware by soaking them for several minutes in a solution of about one tablespoon of unscented household bleach per one gallon of water. Do NOT use this method on sterling silver tableware. The bleach will cause these items to tarnish. Sanitize sterling silver by putting it in boiling water for at least two minutes.

What if I have more questions about food after a flood?

After flooding, people should follow guidance provided by the New York State Department of Health and other health agencies to protect themselves from biological, chemical, and electrical hazards as they cleanup their properties, homes, and private drinking water wells.

Helpful resources and information can be obtained at: www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/emergency/flood/index.htm or by calling your local health department (see last page) or the New York State Department of Health at 518-402-7530 or 800-458-1158.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration also has comprehensive flood related information on their website: http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm064572.htm.

RECOMMENDED VACCINES

What vaccines do emergency responders need when responding to flooding in New York State?

Tetanus-containing vaccine (e.g. Tdap/Td) is the only vaccine that is needed in this situation. Please be sure to check your immunization history prior to asking for a vaccine, as you may already be protected. You can check to see which vaccines you have received by speaking with your medical provider, workplace employee health service, school, etc.

What vaccines do volunteers helping with disaster response need?

If volunteers are performing clean-up work a tetanus-containing vaccine (e.g. Tdap/Td) is recommended. Please be sure to check your immunization history prior to asking for this vaccine, as you may already be protected. You can check to see which vaccines you have received by speaking with your medical provider, workplace employee health service, school, etc. For children under 19, contact your child's pediatrician.

What vaccines do area residents (including people living in shelters) who are involved in clean-up work need?

Tetanus-containing vaccine (e.g. Tdap/Td) and influenza vaccine. Please be sure to check your immunization history prior to asking for one of these vaccines, as you may already be protected. You can check to see which vaccines you have received by speaking with your medical provider, workplace employee health service, school, etc. For children under 19, contact your child's pediatrician.

Do I need the Hepatitis A vaccine?

There is no indication for the Hepatitis A vaccine given the anticipated conditions in the region and low probability of exposure. No transmission from contaminated water has been identified in the U.S. since the 1980's. Hepatitis A outbreaks have not occurred following other hurricanes or floods in other parts of the country, including the devastating hurricanes in Florida several years ago, Hurricane Katrina, and the Midwestern floods of the late 1990's. New York State has had few hepatitis A cases in recent years. Even though the water and sewage systems are damaged or out of operation in many areas of New York State, the risk of a hepatitis A epidemic is extremely low. Vaccine will take at least one to two weeks to provide substantial immunity.

Are there other vaccines that I should consider getting at this time?

Everyone should check with their medical provider to ensure that they are up to date on their immunizations. No other vaccinations are recommended secondary to the conditions created by Hurricane Irene.

TETANUS

What is tetanus?
Tetanus is a serious infection caused by bacteria that affects the muscles and nerves. It enters the body through breaks in the skin, such as cuts and puncture wounds. Tetanus can be fatal.

Do I need a tetanus Shot?

You can contract tetanus if you are unvaccinated or haven't been vaccinated in a long time and your cut or deep wound becomes contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva. Immediately contact your local health department (see last page) or see a health care professional who can decide whether you need the tetanus vaccine.

Tetanus containing vaccine is recommended every 10 years. If you have not had vaccine, you should get a Tdap or Td before you go to work in the flooded areas.

Who is At Risk for Developing Tetanus?

Right now, many people are involved in flooding clean up. There is high risk for injury if you are involved in recovery activities. Any cuts and wounds you receive, especially during this difficult clean up time, can be very serious. Don't delay seeking medical attention if you receive a serious cut or deep wound.

What is the difference between the Tdap and Td vaccines?

The Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and attenuated pertussis vaccine) also contains pertussis or whooping cough vaccine. It is recommended for a single dose for adolescents and adults. Td (tetanus, diphtheria vaccine) does not contain pertussis vaccine.

Where do I get a tetanus vaccine?

You can get a tetanus vaccine from your medical provider or you can check with your local health department to receive one.

I do not know how long it's been since my last tetanus shot, do I need one now?

You can contact your health care provider to check your records but if no information is available you should be protected by getting a tetanus vaccine before you are working in these areas.

Which shot do I need – Tdap or Td?

If you have not had a Tdap vaccine, you should receive a Tdap. If Tdap is not available, you should have a Td vaccine. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine containing pertussis in the past you should discuss whether or not you can get a Tdap vaccine with your medical provider.

TETANUS VACCINE SAFETY

Is it safe for a pregnant woman to get a tetanus shot?

Pregnant women can be protected against tetanus but should consult their health care provider about which vaccine they should have.

Is it safe for breastfeeding women to get a tetanus shot?

Yes, breastfeeding women should be vaccinated as all other adults. If they have not had a Tdap vaccine, they should receive a Tdap. If Tdap is not available, they should have a Td vaccine.

Who should NOT get the tetanus vaccine?

Tetanus vaccine should not be administered to people who have had a severe or anaphylactic reaction to the vaccine. This is very rare and if you are not protected, working on this clean-up effort should be done with caution. The vaccine information sheet (VIS) provides complete information about the vaccine and is available when you get the vaccine.

What are the possible side effects of the tetanus shot?

The most common side effect is experiencing local soreness or tenderness. Using the arm normally and taking a pain reliever can help with the discomfort.

TETANUS VACCINE ADMINISTRATION

How will the shot be administered?

It is given in the upper arm (deltoid) muscle.

How many doses will I need?

One dose is needed. If you have never been vaccinated before discuss whether or not you need additional doses with your health care provider.

Can I get the tetanus shot at the same time as another vaccine?

Yes

Where can I get more information about tetanus and tetanus vaccination?

Contact your provider or local health department. More information is also available at the New York State Department of Health web site or www.immunize.org.

HEPATITIS B

Do I need hepatitis B vaccine?

The three-dose hepatitis B vaccine series is recommended for persons who will be performing direct patient care or otherwise expected to have contact with blood or other bodily fluids; if you will be performing these activities you should check your vaccine history before you come to the disaster site. Hepatitis B vaccine is not recommended for persons who will not have contact with human blood or bodily fluids.

I had my hepatitis B vaccine series a long time ago; do I need another shot now?

No. A booster for previously vaccinated persons is not recommended.

I don't know how many doses of hepatitis B vaccine I have had and I lost my vaccine records; do I need another shot now?

If you will be performing direct patient care or otherwise expected to have contact with blood or other bodily fluids, contact your health care provider before you come to the disaster site to determine your vaccine history and need for additional doses. If your vaccine history cannot be verified, consider restarting the hepatitis B vaccine series or limiting yourself to duties which will not involve contact with human bodily fluids.

Where can I get more information on hepatitis B and hepatitis B vaccine?

Contact your health care provider, local health department (see last page), or www.immunize.org.

INFLUENZA/FLU

Do I need the flu vaccine?

All people aged 6 months and older should receive a flu vaccine every year.

I got my flu vaccine last year; do I need another one this year?

Yes. Flu vaccination is recommended every year. Immunity to influenza viruses from the vaccine declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after a year. The flu vaccine protects against three strains of influenza virus. Even if **you were vaccinated or had influenza** last year you are still susceptible to circulating strains of influenza virus **this year**.

I had the flu last year; do I need a flu vaccine this year?

Yes. Flu vaccination is recommended every year. Immunity to influenza viruses from the vaccine declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after a year. The flu vaccine protects against three strains of influenza virus. Even if you had influenza last year you are still susceptible to circulating strains of influenza virus.

Is it safe for pregnant women to get influenza vaccine?

Yes. Influenza vaccine is safe for pregnant women and their babies. Pregnant women are recommended to receive influenza vaccine to protect both themselves and their babies against influenza.

Is it safe for breastfeeding women to get influenza vaccine?

Yes.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

Flu vaccine is available in a variety of settings such as health care provider offices, local health departments, pharmacies, and other private settings, such as certain workplaces. You should check with your own primary care provider first to determine if you can get your vaccine there. Please also keep in mind that not all locations will get the flu vaccine at the same time.

Where can I get more information on influenza and influenza vaccine?

Contact your health care provider, local health department (see last page), or www.flu.gov.

HEALTH CARE INSURANCE AND PROVIDER INFORMATION

What if I can't reach my doctor because their office is closed?

If you have an urgent issue or an emergency you should call 911 and go to an emergency room.

If you need help locating another doctor, a consumer assistance program, the Community Health Advocate, is available to help you. The number is 1-888-614-5400. They can identify another provider in your area that you can contact if your current doctor's office is closed.

What if I can't reach my commercial health insurer?

A consumer assistance program, the Community Health Advocate, is available to help you. The number is 1-888-614-5400.

What if can't afford to pay for medical care and need help applying for public health insurance (CHIP, Family Health Plus, Medicaid)?

Call 1-800-541-2831 for questions about public health insurance coverage.

What if I have public health insurance (Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus, Medicaid) and need to replace my medications?

Call 1-800-541-2831 if you have pharmacy questions. The operators can assist if you were evacuated and left your medicines behind and need to replace them.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION INFORMATION

What if I have a prescription from a chain pharmacy that is now inaccessible due to the storm?

If a patient has had a prescription filled from a chain pharmacy that is now inaccessible due to the storm, another pharmacy within that chain can likely access the database to verify the authenticity of the prescription, and refill your prescription if refills are remaining. Under the same circumstances, prescriptions for controlled substances may also be refilled.

What if I have a prescription from an independent pharmacy that is now inaccessible due to the storm?

If a patient brings a prescription to a pharmacy without a shared database, such as an independent pharmacy, and can present reasonable evidence (labeled prescription vial, label receipt, etc. from a prescriber or a pharmacy in the affected area) that they were receiving a non-controlled substance from an inaccessible pharmacy, they may be provided with a limited quantity based upon the pharmacist's discretion.

What if I don't have my prescription and I am in need of my maintenance medication?

Pharmacists may use their professional judgment to dispense limited quantities of non-controlled substances to patients who state they are in need of maintenance medications but have NO evidence such as a prescription vial, label or receipt.

What if my primary care physician is unavailable, where should I go to get a new prescription issued?

Patients are advised to go to an urgent care or walk-in center to get new prescriptions issued, if

their primary care physician is inaccessible. Patients are also advised not to go to an emergency department unless they have a medical emergency.

DIABETES MEDICATION AND SUPPLIES

I have diabetes and had to leave my home without my insulin or diabetes supplies. What can I do to manage my blood glucose?

There are several options to help you manage your blood glucose in an emergency situation.

Medications

- If you have had a prescription filled from a chain pharmacy that is now inaccessible due to the storm, another pharmacy within that chain can likely access the database to verify the prescription, and refill it, if refills are remaining (also true for strips.
- If the pharmacy that holds your prescriptions is open, but you are no longer in that area, you can call and ask the pharmacist to transfer your prescription to another pharmacy for an emergency refill.

- If you bring a prescription to a pharmacy that does **not** have a shared database, and you can present reasonable evidence (labeled prescription vial, label, receipt, etc. from a prescriber or a pharmacy in the affected area) that you were receiving a prescription medication (non-controlled substances only) from a pharmacy that is now inaccessible, you may be provided with a limited quantity of the medication, at the discretion of the pharmacist.

- If you don't have the medicines you need and are unable to reach your primary care physician, check with an urgent care or walk-in center. They may be able to provide you with new prescription(s). Only go to an emergency department if you have a medical emergency.
- Medicaid and many commercial health insurers are waiving refill time limits, so early refills may be feasible.
- In addition, pharmacists may use their professional judgment to dispense limited quantities of non-controlled substances to patients who state they are in need of maintenance medications but have NO evidence such as a prescription vial, label or receipt.

- If the above options are not possible, in emergency conditions, you may be able to use insulin that is available without a prescription on a temporary basis. These insulins include Humulin R, Novolin R, Humulin N and Novolin N. Switching insulin should always be done in consultation with a physician and requires close

medical supervision. Make sure to closely monitor your blood glucose and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Information that may be helpful for switching insulins is outlined below.

Short acting and rapid acting insulins

- One brand of regular insulin (e.g., Humulin R and Novolin R) may be substituted for another brand of regular insulin. Regular insulin may also be substituted for rapid-acting insulins (e.g., Humalog and NovoLog) on a unit-per-unit basis, but it will have a slower onset of action and it will last longer than the rapid acting insulin.

Intermediate and long acting insulins

- One intermediate-acting insulin product (e.g., Humulin N, Novolin N) may be substituted for another intermediate-acting insulin product on a unit-per-unit basis. Likewise, these insulins may also be substituted for long-acting insulins (such as Lantus or Levemir) on a unit-per-unit basis or vice versa.

Insulin Mixes

- If using pre-mixed insulin products (e.g., Humulin 70/30, Humalog mix 75/25, Novolin 70/30, NovoLog Mix 70/30):
    - One insulin mix product may be substituted for another on a unit-per-unit basis.
    - If no other insulin mix is available, you should first substitute an intermediate insulin on a unit-per-unit basis relative to the intermediate-acting component of the mix (e.g., in the examples above, approximately ¾ of the total unit dose of the mix).
    - If regular or rapid-acting insulins are also available, they may be used before major meals along with the intermediate- or long-acting insulin (dosed as above) in doses equivalent to approximately ¼ of the total dose of pre-mixed insulin usually taken before that meal.

Insulin Pumps

- People using insulin pumps who must switch to injected insulin may substitute an intermediate- or long-acting insulin for the 24 hour total daily basal dose of infused insulin on a unit-per-unit basis, always making sure that the total dose of intermediate acting insulin such as NPH is split between morning and evening doses.

- If regular or rapid acting insulin is also available, people should administer mealtime insulin according to their previous system for calculating their bolus

insulin doses. Long acting insulin can usually be given once a day as a basal insulin.

Insulin storage

- Don't be concerned if you have insulin that hasn't been refrigerated. Insulin may be left unrefrigerated for up to 28 days and still maintain its strength. Avoid storing insulin at extreme temperatures. Avoid freezing or heating.

- More information regarding insulin storage and switching insulin in an emergency can be found at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/EmergencyPreparedness/ucm085213.htm .

Diabetes Supplies

- In NYS, many pharmacies, practitioners, and health care facilities have been certified by the NYS Department of Health to sell or furnish new, sterile syringes through the Expanded Syringe Access Program (ESAP). To find and ESAP provider in your area, go to this website:

http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/needles_syringes/esap/provdirect.htm. They are listed by county and sorted in zip code order. This information is also available via telephone through the NYS AIDS Institute at the following numbers:

English 1-800-541-AIDS

Spanish 1-800-233-SIDA

Deaf/TDD 1-800-369-AIDS

- Although diabetes test strips may be purchased without a prescription, check with your health plan to see if they normally require an order. Diabetes test strips are e stable, even at extreme temperatures, as long as they remain dry.

- If you use a blood glucose meter, check the meter and test strip package insert for information on use during unusual heat and humidity. Store and handle the meter and test strips according to the instructions. If you do not have access to your meter, many pharmacies have low cost meters available. A small supply of lancets is usually included with new glucose meters.

Diabetes Emergency Care Tips

- Keep a source of quick acting carbohydrate (e.g., glucose tablets, orange juice, etc.) available in case of a low blood glucose.

- Be aware that stress can cause a rise in your blood glucose and that erratic mealtimes can cause changes in your blood glucose.

- Recognize that excessive work to repair damage caused by the disaster (without stopping for snacks) can lower your blood glucose.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Check your feet daily for irritation, infection, open sores or blisters. Disaster debris can increase your risk for injury. Heat, cold, excessive dampness and inability to change footwear can lead to infection, especially if your blood glucose is high. Never go without shoes.

WIC INFORMATION

I am a WIC Participant (or I am in need of WIC services) and the WIC local agency in my area is closed. What should I do?

You should contact the nearest New York State Department of Health Regional Office for assistance. They will provide you with the local number for your county. These offices will be open Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm.

County	Associated DOH Regional Office	Regional Office phone #
Albany	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Allegany	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Bronx	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Broome	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Cattaraugus	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Cayuga	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Chautauqua	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Chemung	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Chenango	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Clinton	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Columbia	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Cortland	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Delaware	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Dutchess	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Erie	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Essex	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Franklin	Central New York Regional Office St. Regis Mohawk only – Capital District Regional Office	Central: 315-477-8167 Capital: 518-402-6817
Fulton	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Genesee	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Greene	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Hamilton	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Herkimer	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Jefferson	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Kings	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Lewis	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Livingston	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Madison	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Monroe	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Montgomery	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Nassau	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
New York	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Niagara	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Oneida	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167

Onondaga	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Ontario	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Orange	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Orleans	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Oswego	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Otsego	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Putnam	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Queens	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Richmond	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Rockland	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Saint Lawrence	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Saratoga	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Schenectady	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Schoharie	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Schuyler	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Seneca	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Steuben	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Suffolk	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Sullivan	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Tioga	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Tompkins	Central New York Regional Office	315-477-8167
Ulster	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Warren	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Washington	Capital District Regional Office	518-402-6817
Wayne	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Westchester	Metropolitan Area Regional Office	212-417-5758
Wyoming	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109
Yates	Western New York Regional Office	585-423-8109

ADDITIONAL FLOOD_RELATED INFORMATION

Where can I get financial assistance or more information about how to deal with the flood and disaster?

- You can call the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at 800-621-FEMA (3362); (TTY 800-462-7585).
- If you have internet access, go to http://www.fema.gov/
- If you have a smart phone, go to m.fema.gov

FEMA provides information about what kinds of disaster assistance is available and supports state, tribal and local officials, the private sector, non-profits, faith-based groups and the general public in recovery efforts.

Can I salvage my flood damaged photographs?

It may be possible to save water damaged photos or photos that are stuck together if you take steps right away:

- Try not to touch the surface of the wet photo with your hands.
- If the photo is firmly stuck to another surface and does not easily separate, do not attempt to pull it away. The emulsion of the photo might be pulled away from the paper, permanently removing the image.
- If there are many photos stuck together, they can be soaked in lukewarm water until they separate. Rinse gently. Place wax paper between photos and seal them in a Ziploc type bag. If your freezer is working or you have access to another freezer, place the bag with the photos in it. Later the photos can be taken to an imaging lab that can defrost and dry them. It is then recommended to have the photos scanned and copied in case further deterioration occurs.
- If no freezer is available, rinse the wet photos in clean lukewarm water and air dry them, face up, in a single layer on a clean surface such as a table covered with a towel or plastic. Place small weights on the photo corners to reduce curling. Do not dry the photos in direct sunlight.
- Remember, if undamaged negatives are available, they can always be reprinted.

Can I save important documents that were affected by flood waters?

If the water soaked valuable items such as important documents:

- Rinse off flood debris
- Wrap each page separately in freezer paper or wax paper
- Seal in a Ziploc-type bag
- Put the bag in the freezer

This will prevent mold growth until you can check with a professional restoration company about restoring them.

Many people have been displaced to shelters. Am I at risk of getting MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)?

Outside of healthcare settings such as a hospital, there is little risk of healthy people getting infected with MRSA. However, it is important to practice good hygiene. You can protect yourself from MRSA and other infections by

- Keeping your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keeping cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a sterile bandage until healed.
- Avoiding contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoiding sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

There are industrial facilities, landfills or contaminated sites in my neighborhood and I am concerned that when they were flooded, it released hazardous materials on to my property. How can I find out more about these kinds of sites in my area?

To find out about the facilities or sites in your area, you can call the NY State Health Department's Bureau of Environmental Exposure Investigation at (518) 402-7860 (toll-free 800-458-1158) or your regional office of the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation. Here is a list of their offices and contact information:
http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/50230.html

POWER OUTAGE INFORMATION

Carbon Monoxide

The power is out but I have a generator. What do I need to know?
Never run generators in indoor spaces such as garages, basements, porches, crawlspaces or sheds, or in partly enclosed spaces such as carports or breezeways. You could end up with dangerous levels of carbon monoxide (CO).

What is CO (carbon monoxide)?
CO is called the "silent killer" because it is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-irritating gas. If the early signs of CO poisoning are ignored, a person could lose consciousness and be unable to escape danger. More people die from CO poisoning than any other kind of poisoning.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?
CO prevents the body from getting oxygen. Symptoms may include

- headaches
- dizziness,
- nausea and weakness,
- loss of muscle control,
- shortness of breath,
- chest tightness,
- visual changes,
- sleepiness,
- fluttering of the heart,
- redness of the skin
- confusion

At high levels or continued exposure, CO can cause loss of consciousness, brain damage or death.

Early symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu. How can I know?
With CO poisoning, symptoms may occur or get worse when you turn on the fuel-burning device. Also, more than one person in the house gets sick at the same time, unlike flu that takes time to pass from person to person. Lastly, symptoms are worse in a certain location but them get better when you leave that area.

What should I do if I suspect CO poisoning?

- Get outside immediately to get fresh air. Call 911 if you suspect that you or someone else has CO poisoning.
- Contact the fire department

Are some people more sensitive to the effects of CO?
Yes. Even low levels of CO can be a concern for the elderly, infants, the unborn, those with anemia, or those with heart or breathing problems.

What other way might I be exposed to carbon monoxide during the power outage?
Be careful about the use of these appliances as they can cause a buildup of toxic CO gas:

- Never use a gas range or oven for warmth. .
- Never use a charcoal grill or barbecue grill in your home or garage.
- Never start a generator or chainsaw in enclosed spaces.
- Never use a stove or fireplace unless it is properly installed and vented.

Food Safety

How long will the food in my refrigerator be safe to eat?
If the power goes out, it is important to open the refrigerator and freezer as little as possible. Generally, food in the refrigerator will remain cold for 4-6 hours if the door isn't opened. Eat perishable items first, such as leftovers, meat, poultry and foods containing milk, sour cream, cream, or soft cheese.

What about the food in my freezer?
An unopened full freezer will stay at freezing temperature about 2 days and a half full freezer about 1 day. Foods with a high water content, such as meat or fruit, will stay frozen longer than food with a low water content, such as bread. Here are some other tips:

- If your freezer is not full, group packages so they form an "igloo" to protect each other.
- If you think the power will be out for several days, you may want to consider using dry ice (for the freezer – block ice is better for the fridge). Put any refrigerated perishables in the freezer with the block ice. Make sure to wear insulated gloves if you are handling dry ice and ensure good ventilation when transporting or handling since it gives off carbon dioxide gas as it thaws.

Where can I cook if the power goes out?
For emergency cooking, you can use a fireplace or woodstove. You can also heat food with candle warmers, chafing dishes and fondue pots. Canned food can be eaten right out of the can. If you do heat the can, be sure to open it and remove the label first. You can also use a barbecue grill or camp stove OUTSIDE as they give off carbon monoxide gas that can build up indoors and cause sickness or death.

After the power comes back on, how will I know what food is still good?
Generally, if the power goes out, food in the **refrigerator** will remain cold for four to six hours if the door is not opened. The temperature in the refrigerator should be at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to keep food from spoiling. If the temperature in the refrigerator was above 40 degrees for more than two hours, many foods will need to be discarded. Foods that should be discarded include:

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry and seafood;
- Casseroles, stews and soups;
- Milk, cream, yogurt and soft cheese;
- Mayonnaise and creamy salad dressings;
- Fresh eggs and egg substitutes; and

- Cream-filled pastries, custard, puddings and gravies.

Some foods people keep in the refrigerator can also be kept at room temperature for a few days. The following foods may be usable, but should be inspected for spoilage before consuming:

- Butter, margarine and hard cheeses;
- Fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Fruit juices;
- Fruit pies;
- Vinegar-based salad dressings, relish, taco sauce, barbeque sauce, mustard, ketchup and olives; and
- Peanut butter and jelly.

An unopened full **freezer** will stay at freezing temperature about 2 days and a half full freezer about 1 day. If freezer foods still contain ice crystals, they can be cooked, eaten or refrozen. If they are completely thawed but still cold, follow these steps:

- Fruits may be eaten or refrozen if they still taste and smell good.
- Vegetables should not be eaten if they are completely thawed. Bacteria multiplies rapidly in these foods.
- Meat and poultry should be discarded if color or odor is poor or if meat has been warmer than 40 degrees for 2 hours.
- Fish and shellfish should not be eaten or refrozen if thawed.
- Frozen dinners should be kept refrigerated and cooked as soon as possible.
- Ice cream should be discarded.

Remember: When in Doubt, Throw it Out!!

Chainsaw Safety

The wind knocked down a lot of trees in my area, but I have a chainsaw. Can I do my own cleanup?

It is best to consider a professional tree service. Pruning and removing limbs from storm damaged trees is not the same thing as cutting firewood from a tree already on the ground. Branches and trees that are twisted and bent are usually under a strain that you might not see until a chainsaw hits it and releases the stored energy. There are many safe work practices associated with chainsaw use that are provided during a hands-on training. For more information, see http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/chainsaw_safety.htm

NYS Local Health Departments

COUNTY	PHONE
ALBANY	518-447-4580
ALLEGANY	585-268-9250
BROOME	607-778-2802
CATTARAUGUS	716-373-8050
CAYUGA	315-253-1451
CHAUTAUQUA	716-753-4312
CHEMUNG	607-737-2028
CHENANGO	607-337-1660
CLINTON	518-565-4840
COLUMBIA	518-828-3358
CORTLAND	607-753-5036
DELAWARE	607-746-3166
DUTCHESS	845-486-3400
ERIE	716-858-6976
ESSEX	518-873-3500
FRANKLIN	518-481-1710
FULTON	518-736-5720
GENESEE	585-344-2580 ext. 5000
GREENE	518-719-3600
HAMILTON	518-648-6497
HERKIMER	315-867-1176
JEFFERSON	315-786-3770

LEWIS	315-376-5453
LIVINGSTON	585-243-7270
MADISON	315-366-2361
MONROE	585-753-2991
MONTGOMERY	518-853-3531
NASSAU	516-227-9500
NYC	311
NIAGARA	716-439-7435
ONEIDA	315-798-6400
ONONDAGA	315-435-3252
ONTARIO	585-396-4343
ORANGE	845-291-2332
ORLEANS	585-589-3278
OSWEGO	315-349-3545
OTSEGO	607-547-4230
PUTNAM	845-278-6130
RENSSELAER	518-270-2626
ROCKLAND	845-364-2512
ST. LAWRENCE	315-386-2325
SARATOGA	518-584-7460
SCHENECTADY	518-386-2810
SCHOHARIE	518-295-8365
SCHUYLER	607-535-8140
SENECA	315-539-1920
STEUBEN	607-664-2438

SUFFOLK	631-854-0000
SULLIVAN	845-292-5910
TIOGA	607-687-8600
TOMPKINS	607-274-6674
ULSTER	845-340-3150
WARREN	518-761-6580
WASHINGTON	518-746-2400
WAYNE	315-946-5749
WESTCHESTER	914-813-5000
WYOMING	585-786-8890
YATES	315-536-5160