



OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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Friday, June 30, 2017
3:20 p.m.

Flood Clean-Up Safety Reminders from Midland County Health Department

With the recent flooding in Midland County and surrounding areas, it is especially important at this time to protect the health and safety of families. If there has been flooding or sewage backup in your home or business, it is likely that contamination has occurred.

Safety During Clean-Up

How to Clean Up

Walls, hard-surfaced floors, and many other household surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry clean them. For items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, discard them. Steam clean or discard all carpeting. If there has been a backflow of sewage into the house, wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during clean-up. Remove and discard contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected, such as wall coverings, cloth, rugs, and drywall. Additional guidance is available from the Midland County Health Department at www.co.midland.mi.us/healthdepartment.

How to Avoid Illness

Always wash your hands with soap and water after participating in flood clean-up activities and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage. Waterproof durable gloves can help limit direct contact with contaminated items and provide an additional level of safety. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a doctor or health department determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary.

Safe Food & Water

How to Make Sure Your Food is Safe

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. For infants, use only pre-prepared canned baby formula that requires no added water, rather than powdered formulas prepared with treated water. Thawed food can usually be eaten or refrozen if it is still "refrigerator cold," or if it still contains ice crystals. To be safe, remember, "When in doubt, throw it out." Discard any refrigerated or frozen food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.

How to Make Sure Your Water is Safe

The City of Midland municipal water supply is considered safe and not affected by the flood. Flooded, private water wells should be tested and disinfected after flood waters recede. Questions about testing should be directed to the Midland County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) or state agencies such as the Department of Environmental Quality

(MDEQ). Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. The MCDPH can make specific recommendations for boiling or treating drinking water in your area.

Environmental Hazards

How to Deal With Chemical Hazards

Be aware of potential chemical hazards you may encounter during flood recovery. Flood waters may have buried or moved hazardous chemical containers of solvents or other industrial chemicals from their normal storage places. If any propane tanks (whether 20-lb. tanks from a gas grill or household propane tanks) are discovered, do not attempt to move them yourself. These represent a very real danger of fire or explosion, and if any are found, police or fire departments or your State Fire Marshal's office should be contacted immediately. Car batteries, even those in flood water, may still contain an electrical charge and should be removed with extreme caution by using insulated gloves. Avoid coming in contact with any acid that may have spilled from a damaged car battery.

Mold Issues

Clean up and dry out the building as quickly as possible. Open doors and windows. Use fans to dry out the building. See the Center for Disease Control (CDC) fact sheet for drying out your house [Re-entering Your Flooded Home](#) for more information.

When in doubt, take it out!

Remove all porous items that have been wet for more than 48 hours and that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried. These items can remain a source of mold growth and should be removed from the home. Porous, non-cleanable items include carpeting and carpet padding, upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material, some clothing, leather, paper, wood, and food. Removal and cleaning are important because even dead mold may cause allergic reactions in some people.

To prevent mold growth, clean wet items and surfaces with detergent and water. Homeowners may want to temporarily store items outside of the home until insurance claims can be filed. [See recommendations by the Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#). If you wish to disinfect, refer to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) document, [A Brief Guide to Mold and Moisture in Your Home](#).

If there is mold growth in your home, you should clean up the mold and fix any water problem, such as leaks in roofs, walls, or plumbing. Controlling moisture in your home is the most critical factor for preventing mold growth.

To remove mold growth from hard surfaces, use commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than 1 cup of household laundry bleach in 1 gallon of water. Use a stiff brush on rough surface materials such as concrete.

If you choose to use bleach to remove mold:

- Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners. Mixing bleach with ammonia or other cleaning products will produce dangerous, toxic fumes
- Open windows and doors to provide fresh air.
- Wear non-porous gloves and protective eye wear.
- If the area to be cleaned is more than 10 square feet, consult the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guides titled [Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#) or [A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home](#).
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using bleach or any other cleaning product.
- For more information on personal safety while cleaning up after a natural disaster, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/workers.html>.

If you plan to be inside the impacted building for a while, or if you plan to clean up mold, you should buy an N95 mask at your local home supply store and wear it while in the building for breathing protection. Make certain that you follow instructions on the package for fitting the mask tightly to your face. If you go back into the building for a short time and are not cleaning up mold, you should not need to wear an N95 mask. Good ventilation and air flow can also reduce the need for breathing protection.

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact a water damage restoration specialist or the Midland County Department of Public Health at:

220 W. Ellsworth Street
Midland, MI 48640
(989) 832-6679

You may also visit the Midland County Health Department's website at <https://co.midland.mi.us/HealthDepartment.aspx> or the Health Department's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Midland-County-Health-Department-1236115449741110>.

Information adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) documents