



Board of Chosen Freeholders
SALEM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Flood Remediation & Mold Safety

With the recent heavy rains in our area, many homes may have experienced flooding. Even if just your basement or sheds got water, it is important to take care of these issues immediately to avoid and health problems that it can lead to. The Salem County Health Department would like to offer a few steps that you can take to avoid any harmful aftereffects of the flood.

The most common and harmful effect of flooding is mold. Any time something gets wet and stay wet for more than 2 days, mold can grow. If water got into your house, it is best to clean and dry everything in your house as much as possible. Sometimes, even items that were not under water can grow mold because the spores may be in the air. Cleaning everything in the area can prevent mold from forming. If a lot of mold has formed, it may be best to call a professional to do the job. If you or a family member have asthma or allergies, it may be dangerous for them to be around mold, as it is a common cause of breathing problems. It is best to speak with your doctor or specialist before re-entering or cleaning your home if you or someone who lives there suffers from breathing issues.

Before you do any clean up, try to repair the source of the water or mold will grow again. When cleaning, be sure that you are wearing proper protection. If you have one, wear an N-95 mask. These are the only masks that can prevent mold from passing through and are available at local hardware stores. Wear long sleeves and pants to cover as much of your skin as possible; work boots should be worn to keep feet dry. You should not touch the mold with your bare hands so wear gloves and goggles without vent holes so the mold does not get into your eyes. Anything that can't be cleaned and got wet from the flood should be thrown away. You should also use anti-bacterial detergent or cleaner. Never mix bleach with other chemicals or cleaners, it can create dangerous fumes.

When recovering from any disaster situation, food and water safety is also important to consider. Food in the refrigerator will remain at proper temperatures for approximately 4 hours if the refrigerator door is kept closed. A full freezer of food is safe for 48 hours if the door is unopened and 24 hours if the freezer is only half full. Generally, if a food has been kept above 40° F for over 2 hours, it should be thrown away. If any food has been exposed to flood waters, it should be discarded. Check out www.foodsafety.gov for a comprehensive list of what you can save and what should be thrown away.

After an emergency, you should always check with local officials to be sure that your home's water source has not been contaminated. If your tap water has been contaminated, do not drink it or use it to wash dishes, wash or prepare food, make ice, make cold drinks or brush your teeth. When showering, do not get the water in your mouth and when doing laundry, use only hot cycles. It is best to have a supply of clean, bottled water on hand to use in these situations. If you do not have clean, bottled water on hand, you can boil your tap water to make it safe. Bring water to a rolling boil for at least a minute and allow it to cool before using. You can store boiled



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water for an extended period or time. Any countertops, dishes or other food-contact surfaces should be cleaned with soap and clean, warm water. Soaking these items in a teaspoon of bleach mixed with a gallon of water is best to fully sanitize these items. Items such as wooden cutting boards and baby bottle nipples or pacifiers should be thrown away if they came into contact with flood waters because they cannot be fully sanitized.

It is also very important to clean up water outside your home. If water has pooled in trashcans, other containers, pool covers, rain gutters or even in low-lying areas of your lawn, you should try to clear it up. Standing water can be a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which can be carriers of West Nile Virus and other diseases. Although West Nile Virus is not very common, there are still some serious cases every year. After a disaster, it is important to try to prevent any other negative outcomes. If you are having an issue with standing water or an excessive amount of mosquitoes, please call the Mosquito Control Commission at 856-769-3255.

Emergencies can happen at any time so the most important step out of all of this is to be prepared ahead of time. Gather supplies like clean, bottled water, non-perishable foods, flashlights, batteries, medications. Have a family plan of what you will do in different situations if you need to stay in your home without power, if you need to evacuate, or if you are separated from each other. For more information about being prepared for emergencies, please go to www.Ready.gov or www.CSHealth.org.