



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 28, 2021

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS DURING FLOODS

Logan County, along with much of Central Illinois, has recently experienced heavy rain which has led to local flooding. Unfortunately, the potential for heavy rain is still in the forecast for much of this week. Public health and safety are serious concerns after heavy rains and flooding. Flood water can carry bacteria and other contaminants that could cause disease and illness. The Logan County Department of Public Health (LCDPH) urges all residents to take safety precautions against diseases during floods which include the following:

- Avoid or minimize skin contact with flood water, especially cuts and sores. Keep open wounds clean and covered. Always wash thoroughly after coming in contact with flood water or objects contaminated with flood water. Frequent hand washing, as a whole, is important.
- Do not use water from flooded water wells. An alternate source of potable water should be obtained such as bottled water. Once flood waters recede, the well should be tested to make sure the water is safe to drink. Contact LCDPH to obtain a test kit.
- Do not eat or drink anything that has been exposed to flood water. Canned food goods can be used if the can is in good condition (free of swelling, denting, punctures) and the contents are not at risk of coming in contact with flood water. Discard any containers, for example, with cork-lined lids or caps, screw or pop tops as these are nearly impossible to clean. If they appear undamaged, all-metal cans are usually safe. Thoroughly wash cans and immerse in bleach water (1 tablespoon of unscented bleach per one gallon of potable water) for 15 minutes, then air dry or dry with a clean

towel to prevent rusting. If you are not sure if the food is safe, remember, when in doubt, throw it out.

- Electricity and water are a deadly combination. Turn off main power switch if necessary. Avoid working with appliances that are wet. Air out appliances and outlets before use. Do not work with appliances, wiring or electricity if you are wet or standing in water. If you have questions regarding electrical systems in the home, contact your utility company, and be sure to follow appliance manufacturer precautions.
- Run gas powered generators in a well-ventilated area (not in home or garage) to avoid carbon monoxide exposure. Heaters that use wood, coal, natural gas or kerosene products produce carbon monoxide gas and should also be used only in well ventilated areas. Be sure to follow all the manufacturer precautions.
- Wear rubber boots, gloves and proper respirator masks (N95 or HEPA) during clean up. Use soap, rinse water and a sanitizer solution consisting of no more than 1 cup of bleach per one gallon of water for surface areas. For food contact surfaces such as counter tops, shelves, cutting boards, etc., and areas where small children play, use no more than 1 tablespoon (½ ounce) of laundry bleach to each gallon of water. Discard objects that are porous, non-cleanable or cannot be laundered.
- Avoid mosquito exposure by wearing a mosquito repellent (for example, one that contains DEET), wearing long-sleeved and light-colored clothing, repairing any screens, removing any standing water on your property, and minimizing the amount of time outdoors between dusk and dawn. While most mosquitoes that breed in standing water from floods are merely pests, some can still carry diseases such as West Nile Virus.

For further details pertaining to these and other hazards, and how you can protect yourself and your family from floods and other disasters, check out the publication from the Illinois Department of Public Health “Surviving Disasters: A Citizen’s Emergency Handbook” which can be found at www.idph.state.il.us/pdf/SurvivingDisasters.pdf. For additional information, contact the Logan County Department of Public Health at 217-735-2317 or visit their website at WWW.LCDPH.ORG.

Information Source: IL Dept. of Public Health

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