Monroe County Health Department

Monroe County, Indiana

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FLOODING CAN BRING NUMEROUS HEALTH RISKS

Bloomington, IN -- The Monroe County Health Department reminds residents that flooding can pose serious health risks, including exposure to water-borne diseases, drowning, and dangers associated with cleaning up flood-damaged areas.

County health officials recommend that people wait until the floodwaters recede before beginning any clean-up efforts. People can be severely injured as the result of slippery conditions, poor visibility, floating debris, or electrical shock. In addition, small cuts or scratches on the skin can make someone more susceptible to diseases like tetanus, E. coli, and other pathogens.

Food Safety After A Flood

A flood or the loss of power due to storms could jeopardize the safety of food stored in the home. Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep food safe will help reduce the risk of foodborne illness and minimize the potential loss of food. Health officials recommend that people follow these simple tips to ensure food safety:

- Keep meat, poultry, fish, and eggs refrigerated at or below 40 °F and frozen food at or below 0 °F. This may be difficult when the power is out. In order to maintain the cold temperature, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. If it's unclear that a particular food is cold enough, take its temperature with a food thermometer. Remember, when in doubt, throw it out.
- Be prepared for future emergency situations by having items on hand that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on the outdoor grill. Be sure to keep a hand-held can opener to use in an emergency.
- Consider what you can do ahead of time to store your food safely in an emergency. If you live in a location that could be affected by a flood, plan your food storage on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water.

For further information regarding food safety, please visit:
http://www.in.gov/isdh/20886.htm
https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/documents/1532747664_8238.pdf

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Dealing With Mold After A Flood

Molds can be found almost anywhere. They can grow on virtually any organic substance, including wood, paper, carpet, foods, and insulation, as long as moisture and oxygen are present.

When excessive moisture accumulates in buildings or on building materials, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered or unaddressed. It is impossible to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment but mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling moisture indoors.

For further information regarding mold, please visit:
https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/apps/document/center.egov?view=item;id=524

Safe Water After A Flood

Residents who experience flooding and rely on cisterns or wells for their water source should take precautions to ensure their water is safe to use.

For further information regarding water testing, disinfecting and treating, please visit:
https://www.co.monroe.in.us/topic/subtopic.php?topicid=181&structureid=12

Safety Tips

Individuals exposed to floodwaters should wash their hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water. For household cleaning after floodwater contamination, disinfect all surfaces. A bleach solution of ¼ cup of chlorine bleach to one gallon of water works well.

Some tips for safely cleaning up a home or business after the floodwaters recede include:
- Turn off the electricity.

- Clean and dry wet light fixtures before turning the electricity back on.

- Throw away Items that cannot be salvaged after a flood, including wet ceiling tiles, paper products, baseboards, gypsum board (also known as dry wall), and insulation.

- Save carpets by wet vacuuming, shampooing, and making certain that the carpet is completely dry.

- Discard mattresses or other large items if they have been soaked with floodwater unless they can be disinfected and air-dried.

- Wipe wood and metal studs with a bleach solution and allow them to air dry.

- If possible, open windows and doors during the clean-up process and leave them open for at least 24 hours.

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Health officials also remind residents to prepare well in advance of a flood emergency. The Monroe County Health Department recommends that residents stockpile at least a 72-hour supply of clean water, food, and medicine for every member of the household.

Additional Flood Information:

First Steps to Flood Recovery
https://www.extension.purdue.edu/floodpub/

Indiana State Department of Health Mold Facts
http://www.in.gov/isdh/24347.htm

CDC Mold Information
http://www.cdc.gov/mold/default.htm

EPA Mold and Moisture
http://www.epa.gov/mold/

Septic and flooding
http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/fs_whattodoafteraflood_septic_eng.pdf

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