

FLOOD CLEANUP SAFETY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Floodwater in our area was mixed with sewage. Treat ALL mud, standing water, and anything the floodwater touched as contaminated, even if your home looks fine.

Who should NOT do cleanup

- Children and pregnant people
- Anyone with a weak immune system (ie: people on chemotherapy, transplant patients, or anyone on steroids or other immune-lowering medicines)
- People with serious lung problems such as asthma or COPD

Wear protective gear every time

- Waterproof gloves (heavy rubber)
- Rubber boots
- Goggles or safety glasses
- A mask or respirator (N95 or better). Mold and dust stir up during cleanup.
- Long sleeves and pants, or waterproof coveralls
- Wash hands well after any contact, and before eating, drinking, or smoking.

Protect cuts and wounds

- Cover any cut or scrape with a waterproof bandage before you start.
- If you get a cut during cleanup, wash it right away with soap and clean water.
- If it's been more than 5 years since your last tetanus shot and you get a cut, call or visit your doctor or clinic.

How to clean in and around your home or business

- Remove mud and standing water. Pump out standing water and disinfect the area.
- Throw out things that soaked up floodwater and cannot be fully cleaned: carpet, mattresses, stuffed furniture, drywall and insulation below the water line, and soaked papers or cardboard.
- Scrub hard surfaces with soap or detergent and water first. Bleach does not work well on dirty surfaces.
- Then disinfect with bleach: about 1 cup of household bleach in 5 gallons of water. Leave it wet on the surface for at least 1 minute.
- Dry everything out within 24 to 48 hours. Open windows and use fans and dehumidifiers to stop mold.
- Remove mud while it is still damp. If it has already dried, lightly mist it before scraping.
- Never dry-sweep or use leaf blowers on dried mud. Use wet methods or HEPA vacuum.
- Keep wearing an N95 mask (or better), gloves, eye protection, and waterproof boots after the mud dries. Dry work makes more dust.
- Throw out wet drywall, insulation, carpet, padding that can't be dried within 1 to 2 days.
- Keep children and pets off dried silt on lawns, driveways, and playgrounds until it is removed or covered.
- Wash or throw away clothes and toys that touched mud.

Taking off your gear and cleaning up after work

- Rinse mud off your boots and gloves outside while you are still wearing them.
- Take off gear in this order: gloves, coveralls (roll inside out), boots, goggles, and your mask last.
- Wash your hands with soap and clean water.
- Wipe reusable gear (boots, rubber gloves, goggles) with bleach solution and let it air dry.
- Bag disposable items and throw them away.
- Wash work clothes separately in hot water. Leave dirty boots outside.
- Shower after every cleanup session.

Everyday hygiene

- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in the work area.
- Wash hands before eating and after using the toilet.
- Keep children and pets out of mud and puddles.

Drinking water

- If you have a private well that was flooded, do NOT drink, cook, or brush your teeth with it. Have it disinfected and tested. Use bottled water or another safe source until then.

When to seek medical attention - Tell your provider you were in flood cleanup

Over the next 3 to 4 weeks, get medical care if you have:

- Diarrhea, vomiting, or stomach cramps
- Fever, chills, headache, or muscle aches (especially in the calves)
- A cut that becomes red, swollen, warm, painful, or has pus
- Coughing, wheezing, or trouble breathing

FLOOD MUD: STILL A RISK AFTER IT DRIES

Even if mud looks dry, or a test shows lower E. coli, it can still make you sick. E. coli is just a warning sign that sewage is present. Other germs and irritants can last much longer.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

- Wet mud is the riskiest. Germs live longer in mud than in water.
- Mud that looks dry can stay damp and contaminated underneath, especially if it is thick or in the shade, in basements, or in crawl spaces.
- Some germs (like Giardia and Cryptosporidium) can survive for months in damp soil and are not killed by chlorine.
- Sewage can carry germs that cause stomach illness, including norovirus.
- Mold can grow on wet walls, carpet, wood, and furniture within days.
- Dust from dried mud can carry germs, mold, and irritants.

Bleach safety: NEVER mix bleach with ammonia or other cleaners. It makes toxic gas. Keep windows open. **Generator safety:** NEVER run a generator, grill, or gas engine indoors or in a garage. Carbon monoxide can kill.