

NEWS RELEASE
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For immediate release

Clean-up after a flood

Sunrise Health Region is reminding residents who have been affected by recent flooding in your areas of tips and tricks for effective clean-up after a flood. Clean-up is an extremely important step as flood water may be highly contaminated with disease-causing microbes. Proper clean-up after the flood also reduces chances of growth of mould.

Valuable information to guide the public in this process is contained in a document produced by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health entitled Cleaning up after the flood. This document is accessible on the Sunrise Health Region website (sunrisehealthregion.sk.ca) and the Ministry of Health website (health.gov.sk.ca/flood-cleanup) and copies can also be obtained from the Health Services desk at the information centre at Kinsmen arena. The document focuses on 4 aspects:

- 1) What to do before you start cleaning up
- 2) General clean-up
- 3) Disinfection
- 4) Signs of indoor exposure to mold

What precautions must be taken?

- Get advice from an electrician and a natural gas specialist to make sure that electricity and gas have been shut off and do not constitute a danger during the cleanup process.
- Check the building for structural damage that may constitute a danger. If such damage is found, contact a building inspector or a structural engineer for advice.
- Weather permitting, get fresh air moving through the house by leaving doors and windows open.
- Keep small children, pregnant women and people with health problems away from the flooded area until the clean-up is complete.
- Avoid contact with the dirty water by wearing protective clothing such as rubber gloves and rubber boots. In a dusty environment, wear an N95 mask.
- When you have finished cleaning, remove the protective clothing and wash your hands with water and soap.
- Remember that many of the cleaning and disinfecting solutions are poisonous, so be sure to read and follow the labels' instructions. Keep all chemical products away from children.
- If the flood is extensive, consider hiring a contractor to do the clean-up.

General cleanup

- Drain the basement if required. If the water has been standing for a long time, is cloudy or has a foul smell, it is likely polluted. Two (2) litres of bleach can be added to the water.
- Flood debris must be treated as potentially dangerous waste and should be disposed of immediately in a sanitary manner. You can double-bag it in plastic garbage bags and take it to a waste disposal site.
- Flooded surfaces should be cleaned with a good detergent and then rinsed with a disinfectant solution.
- Concrete surfaces can be cleaned with a solution of trisodium phosphate (TSP) in water, mixed as one part TSP to forty parts of warm water (1/2 cup of TSP to 1 gallon water). TSP is highly corrosive and gloves and eye protection are required when using. Rinse well and disinfect with a suitable diluted disinfectant.

Disinfection

Disinfection can be done only after surfaces have been cleaned with a detergent. The following disinfectants may be used to sanitize contaminated surfaces:

- Chlorine Bleach (i.e. Javex,) plain and unscented. Dilute 1 liter of household bleach in 4 liters of warm water. Do not use bleach on linoleum or aluminum.
- Quaternary Ammonium based Disinfectants (i.e.: Roccal, Germicide).
- Borax (5% to 10%) mixed with dishwashing detergent. In particular, this can be used on wooden surfaces that would be damaged by a chlorine solution.

These products should be diluted with water according to product label directions.

NEVER mix bleach with ammonia since the fumes produced when mixed are toxic.

Caution should be used when using bleach in an area that has been cleaned with other products. Make sure the area has been thoroughly cleaned with uncontaminated water prior to applying a bleach disinfectant. Hazardous fumes may result if adequate rinsing does not occur. This is also a concern if another product is used in an area that has recently been bleached.

Signs of exposure to indoor mould

Clean-up is crucial to prevent the development of mould as mould can easily grow on material that has been affected with moisture. Should mould develop in a home, this can lead to indoor mould exposure. Common signs of important indoor exposure to mould include skin irritation, eye irritation and respiratory problems such as cough, congestion and exacerbation of asthma. Consult your doctor if such signs appear in the aftermath of flooding.

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