

Public Health Home Flooding Safety Guidelines

The Kentucky Department for Public Health issues these safety guidelines for after floods.

Tetanus:

- Avoid contact with flood waters. Flood waters are unclean and can be a risk for tetanus for those who have open wounds that come into direct contact with them. Contact your regular health care provider or your local health department if you believe you may need a tetanus shot.

Mold Cleanup:

- Mold may be present in homes that were flooded. An air conditioner or dehumidifier may be used to lower the level of humidity to prevent mold growth. Use exhaust fans when showering and cooking.
- When cleaning up small areas affected by mold, make sure the area has enough air by opening doors or windows. Use protective glasses or goggles, rubber boots and waterproof gloves. Wash clothing afterwards. If there is heavy mold growth, use a respirator or suitable mask to prevent breathing the mold.
- Remove all wet items that have been wet for more than 48 hours and are not able to be cleaned and dried.
- If mold is growing in your home, you will need to clean up the mold and fix the moisture problem. Mold growth can be removed from hard surfaces with commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Severe mold cases may require an expert to clean up.

Food Safety:

- If you have power outages keep freezers closed to help keep frozen food from going bad. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours and for 24 hours if the freezer is half full.
- Refrigerated foods should be safe as long as power is out for no more than four hours. Throw away any perishable food in your refrigerator, such as meat, poultry, lunchmeats, fish, dairy products, eggs and any prepared or cooked foods that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are safe as long as they are still firm and have no mold or slimy feel.
- To remove spills and refresh the freezer and refrigerator, DPH recommends washing with a solution of 2 tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in 1 quart of warm water. To get rid of any odors, place an open box or dish of baking soda in the freezer or refrigerator.

For more information about public health issues related to flooding, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>.