



Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

Barry County: 330 W. Woodlawn Ave., Hastings MI 49058
Phone: 269-945-9516 Fax: 269-818-0237

Eaton County: 1033 Health Care Dr., Charlotte, MI 48813
Phone: 517-543-2430 Fax: 517-543-7737

Eaton Behavioral Health: 1033 Health Care Dr., Charlotte, MI
48813
Phone: 517-543-2580 Fax: 517-543-8191

Health Safety during and after Flooding

Large amounts of rainfall can lead to high river waters, large areas of standing water, and flooded roads and basements. It is important for residents to remember that this floodwater can be a health threat in many ways.

Floodwater

Everyone should stay out of floodwater. It can contain raw sewage, making it very unsafe. Anyone who will be working in or touching surfaces that have come into contact with floodwater should wear rubber gloves and waders or boots. They should also cover any open sores or cuts with an adhesive bandage.

After coming into contact with floodwater, residents should wash their hands with clean or disinfected warm or hot water and plenty of soap, making sure to wash under rings and fingernails. If someone gets a puncture wound or if a wound becomes contaminated by floodwater, they should contact their healthcare provider to see if they should get a tetanus shot.

Driving

Residents should not drive through floodwater, no matter how shallow it may seem. The average automobile can be swept off the road in 12 inches of moving water, and roads covered by water are prone to collapse. Attempting to drive through water can also stall engines, potentially causing permanent damage if you try to restart the engine. If you come upon a flooded street, take an alternate route. **TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN.**

Drinking water

During a flood event, sewage runoff and overflow from lakes, rivers, and streams can carry harmful bacteria, viruses, and protozoa. If surface water enters or floods residents' private on-site drinking water wells, it can make their drinking water unsafe.

If floodwater has reached wells or if residents notice any change in how their water looks or tastes, or if they are just unsure about the safety of their water, they should boil all of the water they use for drinking, making beverages (including baby formula), cooking, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and washing hands and cuts/wounds. Water should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute and then cooled as necessary. Bottled water can also be used.

If a well has been flooded, it is still unsafe when flooding stops. It must be disinfected. For proper disinfection of the well, contact a registered well driller or pump installer. Contact the Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD) for information on how to sample your well water for testing. The only way to be sure that your well is safe to drink is to have it tested.

Indoor flooding and mold

If residents have indoor flooding, it is important to take action to prevent mold from growing. After floodwater recedes from a home, residents should immediately clean wet items and hard surfaces with detergent and water. If mold is present, it should be removed with detergent and water or a bleach and water solution (1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water). Do NOT flush toilets—the contents of the toilet could end up in the flooded basement.

When cleaning, be sure to wear rubber gloves and at least an N-95 dust mask and open windows and doors. Throw away porous items (carpet, upholstered furniture, clothes, mattresses, etc.) that cannot be dried quickly. If drywall or wallpaper comes into contact with floodwater, remove it 12 inches above any visible signs of water damage or moisture to prevent mold growth. Residents can contact a local garbage company regarding pick up of large trash items. Residents may want to take pictures of damage for insurance purposes.

Fans and dehumidifiers can help dry rooms more quickly. Any leaks in roofs, walls, or plumbing should be fixed. If mold starts to grow, residents should contact a mold remediation specialist.

Food

Any food that may have come in contact with floodwater should be thrown away. Throw away all flooded foods that are not hermetically sealed by a commercial processor. Use a bleach and water solution to disinfect any hermetically sealed containers. Throw away food with an unusual odor, color or texture. Residents should NEVER taste food that has been exposed to floodwater. When in doubt, throw it out!

Electrical and fire hazards

Residents should make sure that their gas and electric are turned OFF if they have indoor flooding. They should not go into a flooded basement or room with the electricity still on. If electrical circuits and equipment have gotten wet or are in or near water, power should be turned off at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. Power should not be turned back on until electrical equipment has been inspected by a qualified electrician. If possible, use flashlights or other battery-operated lights instead of candles.

More information

For more information on flood safety, including cleaning and disinfecting instructions, residents can visit <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.html> or call BEDHD at (269) 945-9516 (select 3, then 5) in Barry County, or (517) 541-2615 in Eaton County.