



Columbia County Department of Health

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For Immediate Release

Water damage in your home caused by floods and/or loss of power can create serious health and safety concerns. You can take precautions to protect your family from developing illnesses associated with contaminated water, food and air and moisture problems.

Contaminated Water Supply

Drinking contaminated water may cause illness. If the public water system in your area lost pressure, a boil water notice will likely be issued for that area.

People in these areas should take precautions to avoid contaminated water, especially individuals with private wells. If your well is in a flooded area, your water may contain disease-causing organisms and may not be safe to drink.

The Department of Health recommends the following:

- Boil water for at least one minute before using it for drinking, washing, cooking, etc.
- Or**
- Disinfect water by adding 8 drops or about 1/8 tsp of unscented household bleach per gallon of water, and then let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy after 30 minutes, repeat the procedure
 - Use only bottled water, especially for mixing baby formula.

After the flooding subsides:

- Disinfect your well using the procedures available from your local health department, or provided on the Department of Health Web site at www.nyhealth.gov
- AND**
- Have your water tested by your local health department or by a laboratory certified by the State to perform a drinking water analysis.

FOODS

- Raw Foods exposed to flood waters should be avoided because of possible contamination. If raw foods must be used, clean thoroughly and rinse with chlorinated water (two teaspoons of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water).

- Destroy the contents of crown capped bottles and foods in glass jars. Their food safety seals may have broken. Destroy canned foods when swelling, rusting or serious denting is visible.
- Cook all foods thoroughly. Frozen foods that have been thawed should be discarded if not consumed immediately, or kept refrigerated at 45 degrees F. or lower.

Household Clean-Up

- Prior to flooding, power should have been turned off in cellars. If possible, wait for ground waters to drop below floor level. Otherwise, drain or pump water from flooded cellars. Wash down the walls, floors and other areas exposed to flood waters. Keep windows and doors open for ventilation. Disinfect the washed areas by applying a solution of bleach with a broom. The solution is prepared by adding four tablespoons of bleach to five gallons of water. Allow the solution to remain on the surface for approximately 10 minutes. Rinse with cold water as soon as possible to minimize staining. You may also use a commercial disinfectant.
- Furniture: Clean then wash metal and leather surfaces with mild soap and water and wipe dry immediately. Some upholstery may be washed on the surface with soap and water and wiped dry. Expose to open air and sunshine.
- Floor coverings: Flush rugs and carpets with a hose and squeegee, and then wash with lukewarm water containing a detergent. Rinse and dry in the sun.

Safety

- Rubber Gloves should be worn while scrubbing damaged interiors with a bleach solution.
- Don't neglect supposedly minor cuts, scratches or other injuries or sickness experienced during the emergency.

For further information, The Columbia County Health Department recommends the New York State Department of Health brochure Don't Be Left in the Dark (#7064), a limited supply of this brochure is available at the Columbia County Health Department. Information is also available on the New York State Department of Health web site www.nyhealth.gov. For questions or concerns you can contact the Columbia County Health Department at (518) 828-3358 Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.