

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RESIDENTS REMINDED TO TAKE STEPS TO STAY SAFE DURING FLOODING EVENTS

[Wisconsin Rapids, WI]— During Flood Safety Awareness Week, Wood County Health Department is reminding residents on how to stay safe during flooding events.

Wisconsin has seen a great deal of precipitation this winter, and we are already experiencing flooding as the snow melts. It is likely to get worse as spring approaches and it is important for residents to take steps to keep themselves and their families safe during flooding events.

Follow these tips to prepare **before a flood**:

- **Stock an emergency supply kit.** Kits should include a three-day supply of food and water, cell phone and charger, flashlight and batteries, can opener, first aid kit, extra cash, and a change of clothes.
- **Move electronics off the floor.** If there is an active flood warning, move electric appliances off the floor and make sure your sump pump is working and has a battery-operated backup.
- **Consider adding flood insurance.** Standard insurance policies generally don't cover flooding. Flood insurance is available for homeowners, renters, and business owners through the National Flood Insurance Program (<https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program>).

Follow these tips **during and after a flood**:

- **Do not drive through flood waters.** It takes just 12 inches of rushing water to carry away a car. When you encounter flood water, turn around, don't drown.
- **Stay out of flood waters.** Flood water can contain bacteria, sewage, sharp objects, and other dangerous items.
- **Drain basements slowly.** Basements containing standing water should be emptied gradually – no more than 2-3 inches per day. If a basement is drained too quickly, the water pressure outside the walls will be greater than the water pressure inside, which may cause the basement floor and walls to crack and collapse.
- **Shut off electrical power if you suspect damage to your home.** Even if the damage isn't easily seen, shut off electrical power, natural gas and propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- **Use battery-powered lanterns to light homes rather than candles.** Candles could trigger an explosion if there is a gas leak.
- **Use generators at least 20 feet from your home.** Generators create carbon monoxide. In enclosed spaces, the carbon monoxide can build up and cause sickness or death.

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- **Throw out food if you can't be sure it's safe.** Throw out any refrigerated food if your power was out for four hours or more. If frozen foods still have ice crystals, they can be refrozen. Any food that was touched by floodwaters— even canned food— should be thrown out.
 - **Check your water supply.** If you have municipal water, run your faucet for at least five minutes before using it. If you have a well that touched flood water, follow steps to disinfect it (found at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02362.pdf>).
 - **Look out for mold.** Follow the recommended steps for cleaning mold growth:
 - Before you clean**
 - People with breathing problems, allergies, or weakened immune systems should avoid mold clean up areas.
 - Testing for mold is not necessary.
 - Discard damaged or wet furniture, carpeting, drywall, or household items that cannot be disinfected and dried. Remember to take pictures for insurance purposes.
 - Dry and ventilate your home as much as possible within 24-48 hours after flood waters have receded. When electricity is safe to use, use fans and dehumidifiers to keep the area dry.
 - While you clean**
 - Protect yourself by using proper personal protective equipment (mask, goggles, gloves).
 - Don't mix cleaners! Mixing products containing ammonia and bleach creates harmful vapors.
 - How to clean**
 - For surfaces with visible mold growth – mix 1 cup household bleach with 1 gallon of water. Wash surfaces, scrubbing rough surfaces with a stiff brush. Allow to air dry.
 - For surfaces without visible mold growth – use dish or laundry detergent and warm, clean water. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and sanitize by washing surfaces with a mixture of 1 cup of bleach with 5 gallons of water. Allow to air dry.
- (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02167.pdf>).

For more information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Flood Hazards and Recovery page at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/flood/index.htm>.

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