

Norfolk Insider

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“Ten Things to Know for Flood Recovery”

The following information is from the Department of Health and Human Services:

(Lincoln, Neb.) —The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services says there are 10 things people should know when they return to homes or businesses that have been flooded.

1. Be safe when you enter a flood zone. Wait until authorities have declared a flood zone safe before re-entering it. Wear thick, high rubber boots and rubber or dry leather gloves. Watch for downed electrical wires and flood debris. Check with your doctor to see if you need a tetanus shot.
2. Make sure your water is safe to drink. If water looks, tastes or smells odd, it may be contaminated. If your water supply may be contaminated, drink boiled, commercially bottled, or treated water until it is tested and found safe. Don't use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush teeth, wash and prepare food, or make ice. Boiling water at a rolling boil for one minute or more will kill bacteria. Water may be treated with chlorine by thoroughly mixing six drops of household bleach per gallon of water, and letting stand for at least 30 minutes. Water sampling kits are available from the DHHS laboratory by calling (402) 471-3935. Local health departments and county extension offices may also have kits.
3. Make sure your food is safe to eat. Discard any food that may have come into contact with flood waters. For undamaged, commercially canned foods, remove the can labels, thoroughly wash the can, and disinfect with a solution of one cup bleach per five gallons of water. Foods with twist-off caps, such as pop, juices, etc., should be discarded. Food in a full freezer can be safe for up to two days without power if the door is unopened. Refrigerators will keep foods cool for about four hours without power.
4. Be safe when you enter your home or business. Electrical current can travel through water, so be careful to avoid downed power lines or wading in standing water. Make sure the electricity and gas are turned off to prevent electrical shock, fire or explosions. All electrical equipment and appliances should be completely dry before returning them to service. Do not enter any rooms where outlets are underwater.
5. Watch out for structural damage. Walk around the perimeter, watching for signs of undermining, cave-ins, shifting or collapse. Don't enter the building if it doesn't appear structurally sound. Determine if there has been any structural damage, such as loose or buckled flood boards, holes in the flooring, sagging floors or ceilings, shifted stairs, slanting floors or walls.
6. Be careful when you pump out your basement. Make absolutely sure the power is shut off. Try to pump out about a third of the water each day. If water is pumped out too quickly, walls may fall in or floors pushed up by the sudden release of pressure. Any dirt deposited by the flood should be shoveled or swept up, the walls and floor of the basement should be hosed down with water and washed with a solution of two-thirds cup of bleach per two gallons of water. Open the basement windows to allow for air circulation.

7. Disinfect your home or business. Walls, hard-surfaced floors and any surfaces that come into contact with food should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of one cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Steam-clean all carpeting. Remove and discard contaminated materials that cannot be disinfected.
8. Protect your children. Don't let kids play in flood-affected areas or with toys that haven't been properly disinfected. Flooding presents many dangers, like drowning, heavy equipment removing debris, and waterborne illness.
9. Wash your hands. Wash hands frequently with soap and uncontaminated water. Wash before preparing or eating food, after participating in flood clean-up activities, and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage.
10. Prevent mosquito bites. The large amount of pooled water remaining after a flood will lead to an increase in the number of mosquitoes. Use mosquito repellents and wear long-sleeved shirts, pants and socks. To eliminate mosquito breeding grounds, drain all standing water left in containers around your home or business. Consider using larvicides in standing water.

A comprehensive brochure on flood recovery is available, along with more information about flooding and clean-up, at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/SevereStorms/>

NEMA has a toll-free information line for citizens who have questions or need assistance throughout the state at (888) 656-6045. The line will operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, until further notice.

The DHHS website has a comprehensive listing of flood resources at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/SevereStorms.