FLOOD RECOVERY

DIAL 211

For questions relating to non-life threatening health, safety and human service needs Dial *2-1-1*

Flood waters may contain unhealthy substances including raw sewage and other hazardous substances, every effort should be made to limit contact with flood water due to potentially elevated levels of contaminants.

Prevent Injury and Illness

- Avoid contact with floodwater when possible and do not allow children or pets to wade in or play in floodwater. Floodwaters may contain raw sewage or other hazardous substances.
- Do not walk in moving water. Six inches of moving water can knock a person over.
- Practice good hygiene to avoid illness from bacteria, viruses, mold, and mildew. This includes always washing your hands with soap and clean water before preparing or eating food, after participating in cleanup activities, and after handling articles contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- If you have any open cuts or sores that will be exposed to floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and applying an antibiotic ointment to prevent infection.

Children and Flood water:

- In addition, parents need to help children avoid waterborne illness. Do not allow children to play in flood water areas, wash children's hands frequently (always before meals), and do not allow children to play with flood-water contaminated toys that have not been disinfected. You can disinfect toys using a solution of one cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water.

Cleaning up after a Flood:

During a flood cleanup, the indoor air quality in your home or office may appear to be the least of your problems. However, failure to remove contaminated materials and to reduce moisture and humidity can present serious long-term health risks. Standing water and wet materials are a breeding ground for microorganisms, such as viruses, bacteria, and mold. They can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions, and continue to damage materials long after the flood.

Separating Debris:

- Household hazardous waste should be separated from other damaged materials and disposed of with care.

- Common household hazardous waste items include oil-based paint/stain, mercury containing devices (thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent bulbs), lawn care chemicals, fertilizer, pool chemicals, batteries, gasoline, household insecticides/pesticides, and automotive fluids.

- To Dispose:
  - Set aside these items and properly dispose of them at an upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Eco Depot collection event run by the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC).
  - Make and appointment with RIRRC to dispose of your hazardous waste by calling: 942-1430 Ext. 775 or Ext. 241.
  - The updated Eco Depot April collection dates and locations are:
    - April 10: Johnston, Central Landfill, 65 Shun Pike; 8am-Noon
    - April 17: Middletown, Second Beach; 8am-1pm
    - April 17: Johnston, Central Landfill, 65 Shun Pike; 8am-1pm (NEW DATE, NEW TIME)
    - April 24: Pawtucket, Jenks Jr. High, 8am-1pm
    - April 24: Block Island, 9am-1pm

Mold Prevention/Safe Cleaning/Re-entering Home or Business

- Flood water can contain sewage. Throw away anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned.
- Before you start to clean, you should protect your eyes, nose and lungs. Buy goggles and an N-95 mask at the hardware store and use them when working in flooded areas or cleaning mold.
- Use soap or cleaning products with a disinfectant for killing germs. Never mix bleach with other cleaning supplies in the same bucket.
- Open windows and use fans to pull fumes from your work area.
- Dry flooded areas thoroughly. Areas that stay wet or damp for more than 48 hours can grow mold.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you are done cleaning.

Oil Leaks and Spills:

If oil has spilled in your home, you should consider the following steps if home heating oil has mixed with flood waters in the home:

1. **Report the spill**- Contact your oil delivery company to report the spill. You also should contact your local fire department, home insurance agent, local public health unit and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Emergency Response at 401-222-1360 or 401-222-3070, after hours.

2. **Take safety precautions**- If not already done prior to flooding, shut down the furnace to minimize vapor distribution throughout the building. Keep flames and other sources of ignition away from the area. Ventilate the area by opening windows. Avoid contact with the spilled oil. If you need to go in the area wear rubber gloves, overshoes and a proper respirator. Don't track oil from the spill area to clean parts of the house.

3. **Cleanup**- If a small layer of oil is floating on top of the water in a basement, minimize the amount spread on walls, floors and the amount of other damage to your property by removing the oil before pumping the water out. For an oil film, oil-absorbent "socks" may be sufficient to collect the oil. For a thicker layer of oil, a response contractor will use a vacuum truck to skim the oil off the water. **DO NOT pump the water into your yard before removing the oil**, as the oil may spread and contaminate other areas including nearby wells, waterbodies and homes.

For more information:

To report oil and hazardous spills contact: Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Emergency Response at 401-222-1360 or 401-222-3070, after hours

For information and available resources all Rhode Islanders can visit www.floodrecovery.ri.gov. The RI Flood Recovery website is a central point of reference to find help for individuals and for businesses, with links and information about what you need to recover from the rains and flooding.

All Rhode Islanders in need of flood disaster assistance should register with FEMA at www.fema.gov or 1-800-621-3362 (TTY 1-800-462-7585).

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