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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ST. CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE FLOOD RECOVERY ACTIVITIES**

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – As floodwaters begin to recede, cleanup efforts in St. Charles County communities are underway. The Department of Public Health offers suggestions for homeowners, responders and volunteers working in flood-affected areas.

“This year’s flood has seriously impacted a great number of homes, businesses and farms in our community,” says Hope Woodson, Director for the St. Charles County Department of Public Health. “In addition to recommending tetanus vaccinations for residents, responders and volunteers working in and around floodwaters, we encourage them to take extra precautions and follow health and safety suggestions as the difficult, and sometimes hazardous, cleanup and recovery efforts begin.”

Flood Recovery Recommendations:

- <https://www.sccmo.org/769/After-the-Flood>
- <https://www.sccmo.org/780/Home-Rescue-What-Comes-First>
- <https://www.sccmo.org/779/Home-Recovery-What-Comes-Next>
- Tetanus Shots Available for Homeowners, Flood Responders (<http://bit.ly/2XiKKEI>)

Safety Tips for Cleanup

Floodwaters and waterlogged homes and buildings can contain a wide variety of harmful materials, including: bacteria, hazardous materials, sewage, debris, animals and other contaminants.

- Before entering, confirm that your tetanus and other routine immunizations are current.
- Put on rubber gloves, boots, eyewear and a breathing mask before entering the structure.
- Open doors and windows to allow air to circulate for at least 30 minutes before working inside flood-affected building for a long period of time.
- Take pictures of damage and conditions before cleaning.
- Remove pooled water slowly, pumping out no more than two feet of water each day to equalize pressure inside and outside the foundation.
- Remove mud and debris from the home. Then, scrub all areas with cleaning supplies and disinfect all surfaces that may have contacted floodwater or sewage with a germ-killing product or a bleach solution.
- Wash hands with clean water and soap immediately after leaving contaminated areas. Discard or wash contaminated clothing separately from other garments, using detergent and bleach.

(MORE)

(Flood Recovery Safety Tips – p2)

Preventing and Removing Mold Growth

Mold and mildew growth are a concern for any water-touched surface.

- Dry ceilings and walls. Remove flood-affected wallboards and carpets to minimize mold growth.
- Air dry furniture, rugs, bedding, clothing and other material where possible to prevent mildew growth.
- Use fans to circulate air. Discard any material contaminated with sewage or chemical waste.
- Wash or brush off any growth that may be occurring on outdoor surfaces to prevent spread indoors.
- Wash surfaces thoroughly with a cleaning product or bleach solution.
- Allow items to dry thoroughly and reclean as needed.

Food Safety

Be extremely cautious regarding food, drinking water and kitchen items in or near floodwaters.

- Throw away any opened or perishable items and any porous or soft plastic utensils that may have been contaminated. This includes cutting boards, baby/infant items, screw-on capped bottles, food items in cardboard boxes and home-canned products.
- Commercially-prepared canned items may be cleaned if there are no dings, openings or other damage.
 - Remove the product label, if possible.
 - Wash the unopened item in hot, soapy water to brush away dirt or silt. Rinse the item thoroughly.
 - Sanitize the entire item by boiling in water for at least **THREE (3) MINUTES** or soaking in bleach solution for at least **FIFTEEN (15) MINUTES**.
 - Air dry the item thoroughly before opening.
 - Label the can with a permanent marker to denote the product, sanitation date and expiration date.
- Metal pans, utensils and other non-porous materials should be washed in hot, soapy water, rinsed with clean water, and then be sanitized using the method described above.
- Appliances and cabinets exposed to contaminants must be discarded or cleaned and sanitized prior to restocking. Wash the interior and exterior using a bleach solution and allow to air dry.
- Food businesses closed by flood conditions or contamination must be re-inspected by the [St. Charles County Division of Environmental Health and Protection](#) (636-949-1800) prior to re-opening.

Monitoring Well Water

Many residents and businesses St. Charles County rely on wells for drinking water, but these can easily become contaminated by floodwaters. This can pose a significant health risk.

- If a well casing is submerged in floodwater, **DO NOT USE** the water because it cannot be safely sanitized. Do not drink, wash dishes, wash food, brush teeth or make ice with this contaminated water.
- When flooding subsides, small quantities of water can be disinfected and used until the entire well can be properly sanitized.
- Tips to disinfect water and wells:
 - Bring water to a rolling boil for at least **THREE (3) MINUTES** to kill organisms.
 - Water may be treated with chlorine or iodine tablets according to manufacturer's guidelines. Let treated water stand for at least **THIRTY (30) MINUTES**. *Please note: this method may not kill all organisms that contaminate water.*
 - When disinfecting the entire well, sanitize the well itself, all plumbing, all appliances and any associated membranes or filters. Please visit the St. Charles County Division of Environmental Health and Protection website (<http://bit.ly/2XBZJJo>) for tips on disinfecting a well. Well-testing kits are available through the division.
- Licensed food establishments who have had their water supply contaminated by floodwaters should contact the Division of Environmental Health and Protection prior to serving unbottled drinking water.

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