



## Flooding FAQ

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**Q:** I have never had water in my basement before. What do I need to do?

**A:** Because it is difficult to know whether the water in your basement or on your property is contaminated or not we must assume that it is contaminated. All residents should avoid entering any flood water without appropriate protective wear (Rubber boots, gloves, mask, etc.)

According to the CDC “You do not usually need to wear a respirator when you are inside a home unless you are doing something that creates a lot of dust in the air like sweeping dust, using power saws and equipment or cleaning up mold...If you have trouble breathing or have any other trouble when you wear a respirator for clean-up work, stop working and contact a doctor or other medical provider.”

When it is safe to do so, remove all items that have water on them or in them so they can dry out before putting them back in the house. This will reduce the chances of mold developing.

**Q:** I have water in my basement and I don't know it is sewage or rain water. How can I tell?

**A:** Because it is difficult to know whether the water in your basement or on your property is contaminated or not we must assume that it is contaminated. All residents should avoid entering any flood water without appropriate protective wear. (Rubber boots, gloves, masks, etc.)

According to the CDC “You do not usually need to wear a respirator when you are inside a home unless you are doing something that creates a lot of dust in the air like sweeping dust, using power saws and equipment or cleaning up mold...If you have trouble breathing or have any other trouble when you wear a respirator for clean-up work, stop working and contact a doctor or other medical provider.”

When it is safe to do so, remove all items that have water on them or in them so they can dry out before putting them back in the house. This will reduce the chances of mold developing.

**Q:** Should I get a tetanus shot?

**A:** CDC recommends that you get a tetanus shot every 10 years. If you will be working in a flooded area and have not had a tetanus shot in the last 10 years, you should get a shot as a precaution. If you have an open wound or cut that has been exposed to flood waters and have not had a tetanus shot in the last 5 years you should get a booster shot. Tetanus shots are available at the Polk County Health Department, 1907 Carpenter Avenue, 515-286-3798. No appointment is needed.

**Q:** What do I do if I have special medical needs and am in a flood risk area?

**A:** Call the Polk County Health Department at 515-286-3798.

**Q:** What roads are closed in the Des Moines area?

**A:** Visit [www.polkcountyiowa.gov](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov) or [www.dmgov.org](http://www.dmgov.org) for a current listing of road closures.

**Q:** How can I minimize my risk during the flood?

**A:** Do not walk or drive in flood water as items may be submerged in flooded areas and manhole covers may be missing. Avoid skin contact with contaminated materials or water and keep the area well ventilated. Keep children and pets out of affected areas, do not let them play in flood water. Resist the temptation to begin cleaning up before the water recedes. Play it safe and leave the area.

**Q:** What do I do about electricity if my home or business is flooded?

**A:** Contact Mid American Energy to disconnect the gas and power. Mid American can be contacted by calling 1-888-427-5632. There is no charge for the disconnect service. Do not enter flooded areas or wet buildings if the power is on. Have an electrician check the structure's electrical system before entering or turning the power on again. Discard refrigerated perishable foods such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheese, milk, eggs, leftovers, and deli items after four hours without power.

**Q:** Will my drinking water be contaminated by flood waters?

**A:** Contact Polk County Public Works (515-286-3000) or the City that you get your water supply from to check the safety of your water supply.

**Q:** Will my private well be contaminated by flood waters?

**A:** If you have a private well or are not on city water assume the water in your home is contaminated. Do not turn on the pump or flush the well. Unless you have an open wound, you can shower or bathe in water that may be contaminated. Your risk of getting sick from contaminated water is greatest if you take the water into your mouth. To kill all major water-borne pathogens, bring water to a rolling boil for one to three minutes. Visit [www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health/](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health/) and scroll to the bottom for a guide from the Environmental Protection Agency about what to do after the flood.

**Q:** Do I need to worry about mold?

**A:** Mold grows in moist areas and looks like fuzzy or patchy white, green, brown, or black growths that you will see on wallboard, wood furniture and cabinets, clothing, wall studs, and almost any other surface. Mold can be hazardous to your health, do not attempt to clean mold without complete instructions. Get complete instructions for cleaning mold at [www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health/](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health/).

**Q:** Are there other diseases I should worry about associated with flooding?

**A:** Standing water is a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes that can carry West Nile Virus or Encephalitis, which are dangerous diseases. Eliminate standing water found in buckets, toys, old tires, and plugged gutters. Use a mosquito repellent containing DEET. Avoid being outside during the evening hours and wear long sleeves and pants.

**Q:** What if there are chemical spills during the flood?

**A:** If you suspect someone has been poisoned by a chemical, call 911 or 1-800-222-1222. If you suspect that a pet has been poisoned by a chemical, call 1-888-426-4435. Wash skin and remove clothing that may have come into contact with the chemical. Do not combine chemicals from leaking or damaged containers. Do not dump chemicals down drains, storm sewers, or toilets. Do not try to burn household chemicals. Clearly mark and set aside unbroken containers until they can be properly disposed. Leave damaged or unlabeled chemical containers undisturbed whenever possible. Report all oil and chemical spills to the Metro Waste Authority (515-244-0021).

**Q:** I was working in a flooded area and became ill?

**A:** If you were working in a flooded area and have become ill, with symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea, contact your physician. Tell your physician about the area you were working in and any possible contaminated items, such as fecal matter, you came in contact with. Do not handle food if you have become ill after working in a flooded area.

Revised 08/13/10