



MEDIA RELEASE

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Bayfield County Health Department Encourages Caution During Flood Cleanup

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Washburn, WI- Bayfield County Health Department is encouraging local residents to use caution to protect themselves and their families following the storms and recent flooding experienced in our area.

Flood water may contain high levels of raw sewage or other hazardous substances, including: fertilizer; manure; gasoline; and pesticides. Neither humans nor pets should bathe, swim or drink from lakes, rivers, or streams, or in other water affected by flooding. Anyone who gets a headache, upset stomach, or flu-like discomfort, after being in flood waters should seek immediate medical attention.

Private wells may be contaminated: Private well owners whose well has been flooded should assume that the well is contaminated. Do not drink or bathe in water from a private well that has been or is flooded. Consider alternatives such as public water supply or bottled water. If these alternative sources are not available, boil water for one minute at a rolling boil before use.

Once floodwaters have receded, wells that have been submerged in floodwater should be treated. Testing for contamination should take place 7 to 10 days after treating the system. Bayfield County Health Department has well water test kits available, free of charge for those affected by the recent flood event. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides guidance on how to cope with a flooded well: <http://dnr.wi.gov/emergency/FloodCoping.html>.

Flooded basements should be handled with care: 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. Watch for sewage back-ups. Avoid any water that may contain human waste.

Damaged or wet flooring, carpeting, furniture, drywall, insulation, books, children's stuffed animals, etc., should be removed and disposed of to prevent mold growth. Individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma, should not enter areas where mold is likely or suspected. For clean-up, individuals should wear an N95 mask (available at hardware stores),

gloves, and boots. Once damaged materials have been removed, use a 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water solution to thoroughly clean all surfaces touched by flood waters as well as any exhibiting signs of mold. (Note: never mix products containing ammonia, such as cleaners, with bleach, as a harmful gas will form and cause serious injury.)

Storm clean-up should be approached with caution: Downed power lines, broken glass, and exposed nails are some of the dangers people can encounter while assessing damage or cleaning up after a storm. To avoid injury:

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves and gloves when handling or walking on or near debris.
- Chainsaws to be used in flood cleanup should be in good working order. They should only be operated in safe, stable conditions— avoid water-soaked areas or slippery, sloping ground. Individuals using chainsaws should be experienced in their proper use, have proper protective equipment, and not work alone.
- In general, if you suspect any damage to your home, even if the damage isn't readily apparent, shut off electrical power, natural gas and propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- Never use gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices like camp stoves or generators inside the home, or even outside near an open window, door, or vent. Carbon monoxide from these sources can build up and cause illness or death.

Be diligent about food safety to prevent illness: Refrigerated and frozen foods should be inspected, especially if there was a power outage. Check the smell and appearance of all meats, seafood, milk, produce and leftovers and "when in doubt, throw it out." Also, any food that was touched by floodwaters - even canned food - should be thrown out.

More information about flooding in the region is available at www.bayfieldcounty.org/Flood or from the Wisconsin DHS Flood Toolkit at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00631.pdf>. If you have questions, please contact Bayfield County Health Department at (715)373-6109.

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