

Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services: Caution advised even after flood waters recede

Posted on Friday, Jul 14, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact:

Jennifer Miller/Elizabeth Goodsitt
[\(608\) 266-1683](tel:(608)266-1683)

State health officials are urging Wisconsin residents who live in flooded areas to be cautious even after the water begins to recede.

“Residents should avoid entering [flood](#) waters because they may contain raw sewage if septic tanks have gotten overwhelmed by high rain levels,” said Karen McKeown, State Health Officer. “Once cleanup begins, residents need to be aware of risks such as mold, contaminated food and water, not to mention the stress that can come during a major event, such as flooding.”

Before entering a home or business that’s been flooded, make sure the building is structurally safe and that the electric service has been inspected and is safe to use. Gas appliances should also be inspected and approved for use.

Within a few days after the flood waters recede, people may see or smell [mold](#), but sometimes problems take longer to show up. If you have had water damage from a flood in your home or business, the best advice is to talk to a professional cleaning service with flood cleanup experience. They can tell you how serious the mold problem is and the safest way to get rid of it.

After flood waters recede, residents with [wells](#) that were submerged are advised to have the well tested. Well water should be sampled for coliform bacteria, whose

presence indicates contamination and requires disinfection of the well and water system. Residents in affected areas can contact their local health department for information and water testing services that may be available.

Health officials also recommend that residents throw out any food that has been touched by flood water, even if it was stored in waterproof containers. Refrigerated and frozen foods should also 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.”

Floods can be [traumatic](#) and it’s common to show signs of stress during and afterward. It is important for people to monitor their physical and emotional health and seek help if it’s necessary. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has a toll-free, confidential crisis support service at 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained counselor.