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Taney County Health Department



**Public Health**  
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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY AFTER A FLOOD**

### *Tips for Cleaning After the Floodwater Recedes*

Returning to a flood-damaged home, apartment or business may carry some risks and it is important to take extra precautions before and during clean up. First, check that electricity and propane are disconnected at your property site and that it is safe to enter the property.

Floodwater can carry bacteria, waste, and contaminants that may include sewage, chemicals from roads, farms and other areas. To protect yourself from potential illness, avoid direct contact with the water and mud, as much as possible. When cleaning after the floodwaters recede, wear waterproof boots and gloves, and wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Be aware there are many hidden dangers that can cause injury such as: broken glass, exposed nails jagged wood or metal and deep holes. Some of the most common injuries following a disaster are cuts to the feet, so if you must walk in floodwater, wear sturdy shoes and boots.

If you are in direct contact with floodwater or involved in the cleaning process after the floodwater recedes, consider being vaccinated against tetanus. It is recommended that you receive a booster shot if you have not had a Td or Tdap in the past two years. Contact the Taney County Health Department at either location for information about receiving a vaccination.

Mold can grow in buildings that are not dried out quickly. Only 48 hours after getting wet, a mattress, or couch can contain enough mold and fungi to present a health risk. People at highest risk are senior adults, young children, pregnant women, and people with asthma, allergies, respiratory conditions or a compromised immune system. Throw away porous materials that have been saturated with floodwater and cannot be adequately cleaned and dried--such as carpet, upholstered furniture, and mattresses. Sheetrock that has been submerged in floodwater **MUST** be replaced. Scrub hard surfaces and items with warm water and laundry detergent. Rinse with clear water and then rinse again with a mixture of one gallon of water to ¼-cup household bleach. Let this mixture set for five minutes, rinse again with clear water and then allow it to dry completely or the mold and fungi will return. Wash clothing in hot soapy water.

Food safety is another critical issue related to cleaning after the flood. The **ONLY** food that can be salvaged must be in an aluminum can that has been thoroughly washed and cleaned. All other food products must be thrown away.

For more information, contact either office, Branson at (417) 334-4544 or Forsyth at (417) 546-4725. More clean-up information is available on our website [www.taneycohealth.org/emergency\\_response/flood\\_clean\\_up](http://www.taneycohealth.org/emergency_response/flood_clean_up).

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