



TO: Local Media
DATE: June 20, 2018
REGARDING: Flooding in Houghton County - Homeowner Advisory
FOR: Immediate Release

For More Information

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Homeowner Information After a Flood

HOUGHTON COUNTY – Western U.P. Health Department issues the following information for homeowners affected by last Sunday's flood, including tips on drinking water wells, septic systems, cleanup of flooded basements, and mosquito prevention.

Private Drinking Water Wells

Water from a well that has been flooded should be assumed to be contaminated. If the water level rose above the top of the well casing, the well has been flooded. Do not use the well water for drinking, cooking, making ice, brushing teeth, or even bathing until you are sure that the water is not contaminated. Bottled water is recommended. Free bottled water is available to flood victims at Dee Stadium in Houghton.

In order to ensure that the water is safe, the well should be disinfected, then the water should be tested to make sure it is safe for drinking. Well disinfection instructions are available on the health department website www.wupdhd.org. Water testing kits are available at the health department office at 540 Depot Street in Hancock.

Flooded Septic Systems

If your septic system was flooded or damaged by erosion, contact the health department for assistance. If possible, don't use the system if the soil is saturated and flooded. The wastewater will not be treated and will become a source of pollution. Conserve water as much as possible while the system restores itself and the water table falls.

Pump the septic tank as soon as possible after the flood. Only a licensed septage hauler can pump out a septic tank. At best, pumping the tank is only a temporary solution. This will remove silt and debris that may have washed into the system. Do not pump the tank

during flooded or saturated drainfield conditions. Under saturated conditions, pumping it out could cause the tank to try to float out of the ground and may damage the inlet and outlet pipes.

Flooded Basements

Home owners should always wear protective equipment including N-95 respirators or masks, goggles, protective gloves, boots, and long pants when cleaning up after a flood. Standing water and wet materials are a breeding ground for microorganisms such as viruses, bacteria, and mold. Where floodwater contains sewage, infectious disease is a concern. Even when flooding is due to rainwater, the growth of microorganisms can cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals.

Flood water can make the air in your home unhealthy. When surfaces get wet for more than two days they usually get moldy. Mold may be more likely to make some people with asthma, allergies, or other breathing problems sick. For these health reasons, and to lessen structural damage, all standing water should be removed as quickly as possible. Remove all wet material and furnishings from the building. Discard anything that cannot be washed and disinfected.

Floor and wall surfaces should be washed with detergent and water, and then disinfected with a household bleach solution (1/2 cup per gallon of water). Air dry the affected area completely. Always wash hands with soap and water after any cleanup activity.

Mosquito Prevention

Homeowners can effectively reduce the number of mosquitoes around their homes and neighborhoods by eliminating standing water where mosquitoes grow and breed. After a flood, remove debris from gutters and ditches so that water can drain properly. Turn over and drain tires, cans, pails and other containers that hold water and provide mosquito breeding grounds.

Wearing long-sleeved and light-colored clothing, and using insect repellent, can minimize exposure to mosquitos that may carry West Nile Virus or other viruses.

For More Information

More specific information on flood clean-up in homes, flooded septic systems, well disinfection, and West Nile Virus is available at www.wupdhd.org.

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