

## **HOMEOWNER Quick GUIDELINES**

**Do not walk through flowing water.** Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths. Most of these drownings occur during flash floods. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. Use a pole or stick to make sure that the ground is still there before you go through an area where the water is moving.

**Do not drive through a flooded area.** Don't drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out. More people drown in their cars than anywhere else.

**Stay away from power lines and electrical wires.** Electrocutation is also a major killer in floods. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to your utility company or local emergency manager.

**Turn off your electricity when you return home.** Some appliances, such as television sets, can shock you even after they have been unplugged. Don't use appliances or motors that have gotten wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned, and dried.

**Watch for animals, especially snakes.** Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to poke and turn items over and scare away small animals.

**Look before you step.** After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.

**Be alert for gas leaks.** Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns, or open flames unless you are sure that the gas has been turned off and the area has been aired out by opening a window or door when

**Carbon monoxide kills.** Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machine outdoors (including garages). Always run the generator outdoors, away from open windows and doors. The same goes for camping stoves. Fumes from charcoal are especially deadly-cook with charcoal only outdoors.

**Clean everything that got wet.** Floodwaters have picked up sewage and chemicals from roads, farms, factories, and storage buildings. Spoiled food and flooded cosmetics and medicines are health hazards. When in doubt throw them out.

**Take good care of yourself.** Recovering from a flood is a big job. It is tough on both the body and the spirit. And the effects a disaster has on you and your family may last a long time. Read Step 1 on how to recognize and care for anxiety, stress, and fatigue.

**Remove water soaked porous materials like wallboard, insulation, carpeting, wood paneling and wallpaper from your home. Dry out your home before rebuilding to prevent mold growth - open windows/doors, use fans, and dehumidifiers.**

**When removing water damaged materials containing mold, use a respirator ONLY if you have been medically cleared to use one: otherwise use a suitable particulate mask when available.**

**Flooded drinking water wells should be disinfected first with bleach and then tested several days later to ensure that the water is safe to drink.**

**Flooded septic systems will need time to dry out so restrict the use of toilets, sinks, showers, and laundry to prevent sewage backups both inside and outside the home (conserve water).**

**Flooded heating systems (including air ducts) should be checked by a qualified professional and repaired or replaced as necessary. When re-occupying your home change all HVAC filters. If repairing or replacing your damaged heating system, check for asbestos. Follow special guidelines for removing asbestos.**

**Flood damaged hazardous household materials (pesticides, fertilizers, paints, varnishes) should be placed in a leak proof container and removed from the home for proper disposal.**

**For homes built before 1978, use safe work practices to avoid exposure to lead paint when removing walls, windows, and doors.**

**Lawns usually survive being underwater for up to four days. Contaminated water should be hosed off the lawn and shrubs. You may have to replace the lawn if there was mud thicker than one inch deep, erosion, or chemicals in the floodwaters.**

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS CONCERNING THESE RECOMMENDATIONS PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY OR LOCAL COUNTY OR CITY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICE.**

**STATE OF IOWA  
DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH**