



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 03/15/2019

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MARCH 18-22 MARKS FLOOD SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK

Residents reminded to take steps to stay safe during flooding events

La Crosse, WI— During Flood Safety Awareness Week, La Crosse County Health Department is reminding residents on how to stay safe during flooding events.

“Wisconsin has seen a great deal of precipitation this winter, and we are experiencing flooding this spring as it all melts,” said Jen Rombalski, Health Officer. “It’s important for residents to act as flooding is occurring.”

Follow these tips to prepare **before a flood**:

- **Stock an emergency supply kit.** Kits should include a three-day supply of food and water, cell phone and charger, flashlight and batteries, can opener, first aid kit, extra cash, and a change of clothes.
- **Move electronics off the floor.** If there is an active flood warning, move electric appliances off the floor and make sure your sump pump is working and has a battery-operated backup.
- **Consider adding flood insurance.** Standard insurance policies generally don’t cover flooding. Flood insurance is available for homeowners, renters, and business owners through the [National Flood Insurance Program](#).

Follow these tips **during and after a flood**:

- **Do not drive through flood waters.** It takes just 12 inches of rushing water to carry away a car. When you encounter flood water, turn around, don’t drown.
- **Stay out of flood waters.** Flood water can contain bacteria, sewage, sharp objects, and other dangerous items. **If you need to walk through low levels of flood waters**, make sure to have waterproof boots tall enough to protect your feet and legs, and keep contaminated water away from your skin. Good hand washing after you’ve been in contact with flood waters and keeping your contaminated hands away from your face can be very beneficial for disease prevention. To protect yourself from infection from potential injuries, check your medical records, and be sure you are up-to-date on your tetanus vaccine (Tdap for adults, DTaP for children).
- **Drain basements slowly.** 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.

- **Shut off electrical power if you suspect damage to your home.** Even if the damage isn't easily seen, shut off electrical power, natural gas and propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- **Use battery-powered lanterns to light homes rather than candles.** Candles could trigger an explosion if there is a gas leak.
- **Use generators at least 20 feet from your home.** [Generators create carbon monoxide.](#) In enclosed spaces, the carbon monoxide can build up and cause sickness or death.
- **Throw out food if you can't be sure it's safe.** Throw out any refrigerated food if your power was out for four hours or more. If frozen foods still have ice crystals, they can be refrozen. Any food that was touched by floodwaters— even canned food— should be thrown out.
- **Look out for mold.** Follow the [recommended steps](#) for cleaning mold growth.
- **Check your water supply.** If you have municipal water, run your faucet for at least five minutes before using it. If you have a well that touched flood water, [follow steps to disinfect it.](#)
- **Septic Systems.** During surface water flooding incidents, the functionality of your septic can be reduced by ground water intrusion. Contact the health department on ways to minimize damage to your septic during flooding events.

For more information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' [Flood Hazards and Recovery](#) page.