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Use precautions when cleaning flooded homes

Recent heavy rains in central Alberta have resulted in basement flooding, prompting Alberta Health Services to advise residents of proper techniques for flood cleanup.

A few simple precautions can protect residents from flood-related risks such as electrocution, infection and exposure to mould growth:

- **Well water:** If flood water enters a well water or cistern system, testing is necessary before consumption to confirm water is safe. Well and cistern water testing kits are provided, free of charge, by Alberta Health Services Environmental Public Health. More information on well testing is available from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Advisories/ne-pha-2011-07-14-faq-well-testing.pdf>
- **Food:** All food in contact with flood water should be discarded. Only metal cans that are undamaged can be used after they are washed in a detergent or chlorine solution.
- **Flooring:** Soaked carpets should be removed and professionally cleaned or discarded. Flooring underneath should be dried out as soon as possible, and then cleaned and sanitized before replacing flooring. Sheet flooring should be cleaned and sanitized as soon as possible if in good condition, or removed if it is in poor shape or difficult to dry quickly.
- **Walls:** As soon as possible, drywall or panelling should be removed up to one to two feet above the flood-line. All insulation should be removed and discarded and the cavity should be dried as quickly as possible.
- **Appliances:** Large appliances that have been partially submerged (washing machines, dryers, freezers, etc.) should be serviced or professionally cleaned if there is any concern about internal contamination.
- **Furnaces and Hot Water Heaters:** If these have been partially submerged, they should be professionally serviced and cleaned.
- **Electricity:** When working in flooded areas, ensure breakers are off and appliances are unplugged.

For cleaning the areas mentioned, a warm water/mild detergent should be used, followed by sanitization with a one to 10 bleach/water solution (add one cup bleach to nine cups water). It is important to dry all areas out as soon as possible to prevent mould and mildew problems.

For further information on flood cleanup, please visit the AHS Health Advisories webpage at: www.albertahealthservices.ca/1926.asp

Alberta Health Services' Environmental Health Officers can provide health information and site inspections to assist with minimizing health effects of basement flooding. To reach the Red Deer Public Health Office, call 403-356-6366.

Residents with any health-related concerns can call Health Link Alberta to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 403-943-LINK (5465) or outside the local calling area, toll free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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