WHAT TO DO AFTER A FLOOD

This fact sheet provides tips for protecting yourself and your family from the dangers of flooding and flash floods.

Arizona Department of Health Services

RETURNING HOME

Return home during the daytime so that you do not have to use lights (Use battery- or crank-powered flashlights if returning at night).

Shut off electrical power and natural gas/propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately.

Keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.

Do not turn on the lights or do anything that could cause a spark. Notify the gas company or fire department; do not return until you are told it is safe.

Consult your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators.

Avoid any downed power lines or wading in standing water which may contain glass or metal fragments.

TETANUS SHOTS

If you have been exposed to floodwaters or have suffered injuries as a result of the flood, obtain a tetanus shot from your local county health department or doctor if you haven't received one in the last 5 years.

If you have open cuts or wounds, take extreme precautions when walking through floodwaters to prevent contracting tetanus.

CLEANUP OF HOME AND FLOOD WATER

If the cleanup is a smaller job that you can do yourself, take precautions by wearing goggles, fitted mask (if appropriate), rubber boots, waterproof gloves, and long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

If the cleanup is a large job, call a professional who is experienced in cleaning up mold.
Dry out your house when you reenter your home by using fans, air conditioning units, and dehumidifiers.

Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (flooring, furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, etc.) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent, then disinfect with a household unscented chlorine bleach solution.

To make and use a household bleach solution: Add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 quart (4 cups) of water, let stand for 3-5 minutes, then rinse the surface with clean water.

Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters.
Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

After completing the cleanup, wash your hands with soap and water. Use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands).

Wash clothes worn during flood cleanup activities and clothes contaminated with flood or sewage water in hot water and detergent separate from uncontaminated clothes and linen.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MOLD

Keep children, elderly, and people with asthma, allergies, breathing conditions or weakened immune systems away from mold.

Minimize the spread of mold spores by decreasing foot traffic, avoid rapid movements, and cover moldy objects when removing them.

Removal and cleaning are important because even dead mold may cause allergic reactions in some people. Make sure the working area is well ventilated.

Refer to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) document, A Brief Guide to Mold and Moisture in Your Home.

SAFE WELL WATER

Flooded, private water wells will need to be tested and disinfected after flood water recede before being used. Questions about testing should be directed to your local or state health department.

Check out the ADHS (Arizona Department of Health Services) - Flood Response Plan for general instructions on disinfecting wells.

FOOD SAFETY

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. When in doubt, throw it out.

Discard any food without a waterproof container, such as containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), and home canned foods, if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water.

Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the can labels, thoroughly wash the cans, and disinfect them. Re-label your cans and include the expiration date.

MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS

Standing water from flooding can result in an increased risk for mosquito-borne illness like West Nile Virus. People returning to flooded areas should protect themselves from mosquitoes by learning how to reduce the number of mosquitoes around their home and personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

AGENCY	RESOURCES	WEBSITE
Just In Case Arizona	Household Disaster Checklist	www.justincasearizona.com
AZ Emergency Management	Emergency Updates	www.azein.gov
ADHS - Emergency Preparedness	Flood Response Plan	www.azdhs.gov/phs/emergency-preparedness/response-plans.htm
ADHS - Climate & Health	Flood Safety Information	www.azdhs.gov/phs/oeh/extreme/floods/index.php
ADHS - Environmental Toxicology	Well Water Testing	www.azdhs.gov/phs/oeh/toxicology/wellwater.htm
CDC & Prevention	Flood Educational Materials	emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp
Environmental Protection Agency	Mold Cleanup Information	www.epa.gov/mold