

***For immediate release***

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## **Safety Tips and Health Concerns for Flood Waters**

Benkelman – Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department and Dundy County Emergency Manager, Patrick Gerdes would like the public to remember these safety tips in dealing with flooding:

- If you walk in swiftly flowing water, you risk drowning—regardless of your ability to swim. Quickly moving shallow water can be deadly, and even shallow standing water can be dangerous for small children. Keep kids away from storm and flood water. Avoid wading in standing water, which also may contain glass or metal fragments.
- Cars or other vehicles do not provide adequate protection from flood waters.
- Cars can be swept away or may break down in moving water.
- Be alert to electrical and fire hazards. Stay clear of fallen power lines. Call the power company to report them. During clean-up, if electrical circuits or equipment have gotten wet or are in or near water, turn off the electricity at the circuit breaker or fuse on the service panel. Don't turn the power back on until it has been inspected and found to be safe by a certified electrician.
- Remember to wash your hands frequently with clean water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Disinfect toys that may have come into contact with storm waters.
- Clean up and prevent mold growth. Dry out the building as quickly as possible. Clean wet objects and surfaces with a bleach solution of 1 cup bleach per 5 gallons of water.
- If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with soil, sewer or storm water, treat the wound with soap and clean water and apply an antibiotic ointment. Contact your medical provider to find out if a tetanus shot is needed.

Dealing with polluted flood water creates important challenges and health concerns. Here's what to do:

- Remove standing water quickly.
- Discard wet, absorbent materials that can't be thoroughly cleaned and dried.
- When fumes aren't a problem and if electricity is available and safe, remove moisture by closing windows and running a dehumidifier or window air conditioner.
- Limit your contact with flood water. Don't even breathe mist from flood water.
- Avoid flood waters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage
- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from flood waters can contain sewage and chemicals.

Children are at greater risk than adults from contaminants carried by flood water. Since they dehydrate faster, they need to drink plenty of fluids. If the safety of your water is in question, either use bottled water or bring tap water to a rolling boil for at least one minute...and let it cool before use. You should also keep children away from mud and make sure they don't play with anything that may have become polluted by flood water or sludge.

SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook. You can also follow us on [Facebook.com/swnphd](https://www.facebook.com/swnphd) and [Twitter@swpublichealth](https://twitter.com/swpublichealth). Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

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