

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Flooding Increases the Concern for Mold Growth within Our Homes

Flood waters intruding into homes and businesses within Elkhart County during this "roller coaster" winter have caused concerns surrounding the air quality and potential mold growth within these structures. The Elkhart County Health Department along with Elkhart County Emergency Management has the following suggestions regarding flood water and mold clean-up.

1. Keep children, the elderly, individuals with asthma and allergies, and immune compromised individuals out of the affected area until clean-up has been completed!
2. Protect yourself from any microorganisms brought into the home during flooding. Wear rubber boots, disposable rubber gloves, goggles, long sleeves and pants, and a medium to high efficiency respirator (N-95). Most hardware stores sell N-95 respirators. The respirator is particularly important if flood water has been there more than a couple of days, mold may have already begun growing.
3. Stop the water intrusion and begin removing standing water.
4. Immediately begin drying all wet building materials. Help this process by using fans and dehumidifiers. If areas are not dried within 24-48 hours of becoming wet they can begin to grow MOLD.
5. Remove and discard items that can not be washed and disinfected (such as mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and most paper products). Also remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters. Enclose these items in plastic prior to removal to prevent contaminating other areas of the home or business.

6. Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (such as flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, and other plumbing fixtures) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent. Ventilation duct work may also need to be cleaned.
7. If it has been greater than two days since the flooding occurred and drying has not taken place yet, MOLD may already be growing. After thoroughly cleaning with detergent, dry the area completely, and disinfect with ¼ to ½ cup of bleach per gallon of water. The solution may be applied with a sponge, spray bottle, or garden sprayer. NEVER MIX BLEACH AND AMMONIA! ALWAYS ventilate thoroughly when using cleaning solutions!
8. Allow bleach to dry on surface areas with visible mold, and open windows and use fans during this process. IF THERE IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF MOLD IN YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS, YOU MAY NEED TO HIRE PROFESSIONAL HELP TO CLEAN-UP THE PROBLEM.
9. Continue the drying out process. This may take several weeks, ensure humidity is low (less than 40%) during this time. Continue to be on alert for further water intrusion and mold growth!

Additional information may be found on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood website at www.fema.gov/hazards/floods/ ; or the American Lung Association's Fact Sheet on Flood Clean-up at www.lungusa.org/air/flood_factsheet99.htm . ; or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp .

Please contact the Elkhart County Emergency Management to report any properties with flood and/or mold damage due to flooding at (574) 535-6590. If you have questions concerning mold clean-up you may contact Carrie Brunson at the Elkhart County Health Department –Environmental Health Services Division at (574) 875-3391.