



Cleaning Up Safely After Disaster Strikes

Springtime in Michigan brings hope of warmer days ahead, but it can also bring severe weather. Thunderstorms, tornadoes, and floods can cause damage to your home and the surrounding area. Each event poses its own clean up challenges. Read on to learn how to stay safe during clean up.

Severe Weather Clean Up Safety

Tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, and high winds are capable of leaving debris and damaged structures in their wake. Power lines, gas lines, and electrical systems are often damaged. This increases risk of fire, electrocution, or explosion. Other risks after a tornado are stepping on nails and falling objects.

Before you begin clean-up of your home after severe weather, shut off the electrical power, natural gas, or propane. You should wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves. Do not touch downed power lines or objects that are in contact with downed power lines. Use caution when entering your home as the structure may be damaged. Look out for nails, falling objects and heavy, rolling objects. If it is dark, use a flashlight, not a candle or torch as these can put you at risk of a fire or explosion. Take care to clean up any spilled medicines, drugs, flammable liquids, and other potentially hazardous materials.

If you smell gas, notify the gas company or police and fire departments. Do not turn on lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark. Do not return to your home until you are told that it is safe.

Flood Clean Up Safety

Floods put your home at risk of mold and sewage contamination. Before you enter your home to begin clean up after a flood, turn off the power. If you can turn off the power from a dry location it is ok to do so yourself. If you cannot get to the power switch without going through water, call an electrician to turn off the power. Do not turn it off yourself.

If your home has been closed up for a few days, assume that your house has mold. Before you begin clean up, open all doors and windows then exit your home and allow it to air out for at least 30 minutes before reentering. It is best to clean up during the day. If you must enter your home after dark, use a flashlight for light. Remember never to use electric power tools while standing in water. For tips on how to safely clean mold, see page two of this newsletter.

Food & Water Safety

After a disaster like a tornado or flood, your food and water may no longer be safe to eat or drink. Throw away any food that may have come into contact with flood or storm water. If you lost power, throw away any food that wasn't refrigerated properly. Throw away any food that has an unusual smell, color, or texture. Remember, even if food looks or smells fine, it could still be unsafe and make you and your family sick.

Water may also be contaminated. If you have a well in an area that experienced flooding, thoroughly flush your well by running water through an outside hose and then get your water tested for bacteria before you use it. Feel free to contact LCHD to consult about other possible tests to perform. A list of our local drinking water laboratories can be found here:

<https://www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/wells.aspx>



Tick and Mosquito Identification

This summer, the Environmental Health Division is participating in the Vector Borne Disease Surveillance and Prevention Program. This is a grant funded program. It is led by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Certain mosquito species can spread mosquito-borne illnesses. Additionally, some ticks can spread Lyme disease and other diseases. The program will work to identify populations of these mosquitoes and ticks. Mosquito traps will be set up at a minimum of five locations. And tick drags will take place at a minimum of two locations. Educational outreach and press releases will inform the community of project activities. Coordinated vector control and prevention efforts will take place throughout the county.

Mold Clean Up

When mold is in a home, it is usually because there is a source of moisture. Prevent or control mold growth by controlling indoor moisture. If you have a mold problem, your first step is to fix the water problem. To clean up the mold, follow the directions from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) below.

You will need:

- Long rubber gloves
- Goggles without holes or air vents
- N-95 mask (can purchase at a local home improvement store)
- 1 measuring cup
- 2 buckets that are gallon sized or larger
- 2 sponges or rags
- Water
- Household bleach

Before you start, open windows or use fans to blow clean air from other rooms. To make your mold cleaning mixture:

- Put on the rubber gloves, goggles, and mask.
- Mix 1 cup of bleach with 1 gallon of water in one bucket and add one sponge or rag.
- Fill the second bucket with water only and the other sponge or rag.

To clean the moldy surface or object:

- Apply the mold cleaning mixture to the moldy object.
- Let soak for 10-15 minutes.
- Rinse with plain water.
- Dry everything well using towels or fans.
- Repeat if necessary.

For items like carpets or couches that have been wet for more than two days, you should throw them away as mold is most likely already growing. If they have been wet for less than two days and you do not see mold, soak up the water and dry as fast as possible.

Small things, like stuffed animals, should be washed in a washing machine on hot with laundry soap. Dry well. If you still see or smell mold, throw the item away. If you don't see or smell mold after cleaning the item, is probably okay to keep. For more mold cleaning tips, visit: <https://bit.ly/2Y8RHVZ>

Sources: Livingston County. (n.d.). Mold. Retrieved from <https://www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/mold.aspx>

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Steps for cleaning mold. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/STEPS_FOR_CLEANING_MOLD_-_WEB_MDCH_473600_7.pdf



Salmonella in Live Poultry

This spring, Livingston County Health Department (LCHD) visited the Tractor Supply store in Howell as part of a surveillance effort lead by MDHHS to collect environmental samples from the bedding of baby chicks to test for Salmonella. Live baby poultry can carry Salmonella. When people handle the chicks and other birds, they can be exposed to the bacteria and become ill.

The testing will allow for identification of Salmonella strains in Livingston County. If Salmonella illness among residents is reported, the testing will aid in the investigation and follow-up care of cases.

To prevent Salmonella illness, which can be serious if not treated, take these precautions:

- Children under age 5, older adults, and people with compromised immune systems should not handle live poultry.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching poultry or their cages, coops, and bedding.
- Keep live poultry out of your home and kitchen.



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