



## Fact Sheet

### Drinking Water

Council's drinking water supply has not been affected by the flood, however if there is any chance of flood contamination of your drinking water, drink only boiled or bottled water until the normal water supply is safe.

### Bore Water

If you use bore water for domestic purposes and that bore has been inundated with floodwater, Council recommends you use an alternative source (eg bottled water or rainwater) or bring the water to a rolling boil (at least 5 minutes) before use.

Should you have continued concerns about the quality of your bore water, please have your water tested by a suitably qualified laboratory. Water testing laboratories/ companies can be found under Analysts or Environmental and/or Pollution Consultants in the Yellow Pages.

## Post Flood - Health Information

With the flood water slowly receding, the recovery phase is now under way. This fact sheet contains information to assist you in cleaning up your premises.

### Rainwater Tank Water Quality

Check rainwater tanks, particularly inground tanks. If they have been inundated with flood waters, the water may have been contaminated and should be discarded. The rainwater tank should be appropriately disinfected using enough chlorine to give an initial chlorine dose of 5mg/L. The amounts required will depend on the amount of available chlorine you use. Read the labels, however as a general rule:

- Household bleach (4% concentration) – 125ml or 125g/ 1000 litres
- Liquid swimming pool chlorine (12.5%) – 40ml or 40g / 1000 litres
- Granular swimming pool chlorine (70%) – 7ml or 7g / 1000 litres

After adding, allow to stand for at least one hour. You will need to calculate the amount of water in your tank to determine the appropriate amount of chlorine to put in.

### Risk of Disease

Flooding always raises concerns about the transmission of infectious diseases. Past experiences show that disease outbreaks are not common following floods. This may be because of the clean up measures undertaken or the absence of exotic diseases such as cholera and typhoid in our communities.

There is an increased risk of wound infections, dermatitis, conjunctivitis and ear, nose and throat infections if people come into direct contact with polluted waters. People with diabetes should take extra care to protect themselves against wound infections.

Until flood waters start to drop, there is little that can be done, other than to avoid areas under water containing sewage, garbage and mud. The following precautions should be taken:

- Avoid all unnecessary contact with mud and moist soil.
  - Do not enter areas where there is mud etc. unless feet are covered.
  - Wear gloves when handling moist soil or mud.
- All cuts and abrasions should be cleaned, treated with an antiseptic and covered immediately.

## Hygiene

Wash out mud, dirt, and debris from your home at medium pressure. Use a hose and start from the top or upper limit of the flooding and work downward to the floor or basement.

Wash surfaces that have been inundated with flood waters in order to reduce the danger of flood related infections. Pay particular attention to surfaces that children can reach.

Wash your hands thoroughly (with a disinfectant soap) after handling contaminated articles. To be on the safe side, consider all items exposed to flood waters as being contaminated.

## Food & Kitchen Items

**Discard all foods exposed to flood water** except those in sealed (airtight) metal cans. Permanently mark the cans to keep their contents identifiable, remove paper labels, and wash the cans in soapy warm water. Then immerse in a solution of three quarters of a cup of household laundry bleach per five litres of water for two minutes to disinfect the outside of the cans. Rinse immediately in clean water. Do not treat aluminum cans with bleach solution.

If **power has failed for more than a day**, the food in your fridge may be unsafe to eat. Please note the following:

- Do not open your fridge or freezer door unnecessarily.
- Refrigerated food will spoil sooner than frozen food, so eat any perishable foods in your fridge first – such as dairy products and meat.
- If your power is off for more than 36 hours and you have not kept your freezer stocked with ice, food will start to spoil and should be eaten immediately. What can't be eaten should be thrown out.
- Throw out any food that has started to spoil, especially if it smells bad, tastes strange or is slimy.
- You can refreeze partially defrosted food, but you should be aware that the shelf-life and quality will be reduced.
- Freeze extra water or buy ice to keep food cool in your fridge, freezer or esky, in case power fails.

**Food** must be discarded directly into the premise's domestic refuse bin which is emptied on a regular basis.

**Throw out soft plastic and porous items** e.g. wood items such as spoons and chopping boards that probably absorbed floodwaters. Flood waters are contaminated, so you may want to wash dishes by hand using a disinfectant. Air-dry the disinfected dishes and do not use a tea towel.

The **dishwasher** should be used only after you know that your water is safe to drink and your sewer lines work. Clean and disinfect it first. Then use a hot setting to wash your pots, pans, dishes, and utensils. If you have an energy saving setting, do not use it until you have thoroughly cleaned all of your dishes.

Clean **refrigerators and freezers** thoroughly and disinfect inside. Do not turn them on until they have been given the opportunity to dry out. Have them checked by an electrician before operating.

**Food contact surfaces and equipment** can be cleaned with 4% chlorine (household bleach) at a ratio of 25 ml per 5 litres of water.