

TEWKSBURY BOARD OF HEALTH

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**  
**FOR FLOODING CLEANUP**

**May, 2005**

Floods can have a devastating effect on those who go through them. Flood damage could be the result of a catastrophic rain fall that causes water bodies to overflow, heavy snow melt that enters basements, back up of septic and sewage systems into the home, or even the collapse of a nearby pool. This document is designed to provide guidance in ensuring that the home is cleaned thoroughly and properly.

***Disinfectants***

Disinfectants can either be bought or made at home. When using a commercial product, always follow the manufacturer's recommendations, and **never** use it in concentrations greater than recommended (too much of a good thing is not good!).

A bleach solution can be prepared by adding 2 ounces of bleach to a 5 gallon bucket of water. Wipe onto the desired surface and rinse with cold water.

***Cellars***

If possible, wait for ground water or flooded surface water to naturally recede to below floor level. If unable to wait, pump water to a street drainage system (pumping flooded stream water back into the flooded stream will only perpetuate the problem), being mindful that the pressure of the water saturated soils on the outside of the foundation could cause the foundation to buckle or collapse. If you note this type of damage to your foundation, stop all pumping and consult a structural engineer or your Building Department.

All wet surfaces should be cleaned of dirt and then washed with a disinfectant (see section on preparing disinfectant).

***Floors***

Mud and other debris should be removed as completely as possible, and then the floors should be washed and sanitized. Rugs should be removed and flushed with fresh water, then scrubbed with a detergent and disinfectant. Air dry rugs in the sun following a rinse (note that wool fibers may shrink more than synthetic materials)

***Furniture***

Clean and wash metal and leather surfaces with mild soap and water, wiping dry immediately. Some upholstery may be washed on the surface with soap and water, and air dry.

***Clothing***

Clothing should be laundered or dry cleaned as soon as possible. Use special deodorizing compounds available from hardware stores and local cleaners to remove musty odors and kill mildew.

***Electrical Appliances***

Be sure that all electrical appliances are dry and in good repair. Check for loose or frayed cords, and consult manufacturers to ensure that the product is safe for use following immersion in water.

*This information is adapted from a document entitled "Brookline Health Department Environmental Health Services Emergency Procedures for Flooding, 1996".*

***Safety Precautions***

Never enter a flooded area where electrical power is still connected and appliances may still be “hot”. Contact your local power company or electrician to disconnect the power before entering that area.

Always follow the instructions of your licensed professional electricians and plumber/gas fitters, and never conduct plumbing or electrical repairs on your own.

### ***Well Water***

If your drinking water supply is from a private well, do not consume the water until it is tested. Surface water flooding may contaminate the supply itself, or your well head and supply tubing. Contact your town’s water or waste water treatment plant, or a private testing laboratory for assistance in sampling; do not submit a sample unless it has been drawn directly into a bottle supplied by the lab. At a minimum, water should be tested for fecal coliform bacteria. It is advised that more in depth testing for certain chemicals be conducted if the well is in an area that could receive runoff from an industrial area.

### ***Septic Systems***

It is unclear what permanent damage may result from having a septic system submerged in flood waters. If the septic system is submerged and the house is occupied, do not dispose of waste water through your drain. If the system has not backed up into the home, it very well could with that extra flow. Dispose of all waste water at a neighbor’s home that is unaffected by the flood.

Once flood waters have receded, have the septic tank pumped and inspected by a licensed pumper. He/she can make recommendations on what needs to be done for your system. Never attempt to make any repairs by yourself; improper repairs can damage both your system and the environment.

You may wish to seal off the tank outlet while the leaching facility dries out. This turns the tank into a “tight tank”, meaning that the water will not leave it unless it is pumped out, but it will prevent ground water from backing into the tank and into your home. Consult your pumper for pumping frequency.

Board of Health	640-4470
Building Dept.	640-4430
Fire Dept.	640-4410
Plumbing/Electrical Insp.	640-4435
Dept. of Public Works	640-4440



## **LOCAL RESOURCES**