

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STORM AND FLOOD CLEANUP GUIDANCE

Residents reminded to stay calm and use caution during storm and flood cleanup

Burnett County — DHHS Public Health is urging local residents to use caution to protect themselves and their families following the storms and recent flooding experienced in our area. Flood water may be contaminated with bacteria or other hazardous substances. Do not swim or drink from lakes, rivers, or streams, or in other water affected by flooding. Anyone who gets a headache, upset stomach, or flu-like symptoms after being in flood waters should seek immediate medical attention.

“Any private well owner whose well has been flooded should assume that the well is contaminated if flooding covered the well head,” said Allison Fern, Director of Health and Human Services for Burnett County. “Disinfect your well and use bottled water or another safe source of water. Contact Anna Treague, RN at 715-349-7600 for well water test kits.”

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has information on [how to care for your well](#), including disinfectant steps, and a list of licensed well drillers.

Follow these tips to stay safe during flood cleanup:

- **Drain basements slowly.** Basements containing standing water should be emptied gradually – no more than 2-3 inches per day. If a basement is drained too quickly, the water pressure outside the walls will be greater than the water pressure inside, which may cause the basement floor and walls to crack and collapse.
- **Shut off electrical power if you suspect damage to your home.** Even if the damage isn't readily apparent, shut off electrical power, natural gas and propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- **Use battery-powered lanterns to light homes rather than candles.** Candles could trigger an explosion if there is a gas leak.
- **Use generators in well-ventilated areas.** Carbon monoxide from these sources can build up and cause illness or death.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.** Refrigerated and frozen foods should be inspected, especially if there was a power outage. Any food that was touched by floodwaters - even canned food - should be thrown out.
- **Flooding can cause mold growth.** Follow the [recommended steps](#) for cleaning mold growth.

For more information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' [Flood Hazards and Recovery](#) page.

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