



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 23, 2018

Lyndi Warner, Public Information Officer
pio@kalcounty.com
(269) 373-5271

Public Health Advisory for Food Safety and Drinking Water during a Flood

KALAMAZOO, MI—As the community prepares for flooding in the area, the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department asks that residents follow best practices for before and after a flood regarding food safety, drinking water quality and home clean-up.

Food Safety

Flood waters can make many foods in your home unsafe to eat and can affect your drinking water if you are connected to a private water well. To avoid eating contaminated food and to protect yourself and your family from illness, residents should follow these tips for before and after a flood.

Before:

- Have bottled water in your emergency kit (enough for 3 days; 1 gallon per person/day).
- Label and date all perishable food and canned jars.
- Move canned goods & nonperishable items out of areas that could be impacted by flood waters to protect containers and contents.

After:

- Wash and sanitize the outside of undamaged cans and commercial glass jars before opening.
- Throw away ALL baby food containers that were damaged or exposed to flood waters (such as lid button popped on baby food jars).
- Wash and sanitize reusable containers and kitchen ware (pots, pans, glassware, utensils...) before using
- Drink only bottled water until public water and/or your private well has been determined safe.
- If packaging looks damaged or food smells bad throw it away – Don't taste it first!
- Wash and sanitize all surfaces, counters, appliances and cupboards that were exposed to flood waters.

“Food safety following a flood is an important part of protecting individuals and families from food borne and waterborne illnesses,” shares Vern Johnson, Environmental Health Manager. “A rule of thumb for all residents is ‘when in doubt, throw it out.’”

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

3299 Gull Road | Kalamazoo, MI 49048

Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcounty.com/hcs

How to Wash & Sanitize after a Flood:

Remember to frequently wash your hands with soap and clean water. If clean water is not available use hand sanitizer. Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet and after cleaning.

For cans and jars:

- Make a solution of 2 teaspoons of unscented household bleach & 1 gallon of water. Soak jars and cans in solution for 15 minutes.

For cupboards and counters:

- Make a solution of 2 teaspoons of unscented household bleach and 1 gallon of water. Scrub cupboards and surfaces with solution.

Drinking Water Quality

If you are connected to a private well, and flood waters have ponded around your well, your drinking water supply may be impacted from infiltration of contaminants around your well casing. Until your water supply has been determined safe to drink through bacteriological testing, consider it UNSAFE.

- Do not rely on filters.
- Drink only commercially bottled water or water you purify yourself.
- Boil water for 2 minutes to purify.
- Contact Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Unit at (269) 373-5337 for information on testing your water supply for bacteriological contamination.

Home Clean-up

Flooding can lead to widespread damage in and out of the home. Should you have issues with your basement flooding, the following are some helpful tips for clean-up of the area and objects within the affected area:

- After all water has been removed in your flooded basement, wash walls, floors, and cupboards, using plenty of soap or dishwashing detergent. Use warm or hot water if possible. Areas may be disinfected by use of a chlorine solution. Use eight (8) tablespoons or a ½ cup of household bleach per gallon of water. During cleanup of basements or other enclosed areas, provide as much ventilation as possible by opening windows and using fans if electricity is available.
- Severe flooding can cause extensive damage to clothing, carpets, upholstered furniture, toys, bedding and similar items. These items should be discarded unless they can be cleaned and disinfected.
 - Movable objects should be put outdoors to dry and be exposed to sunlight.
 - Some salvage agencies or companies are equipped to process contaminated material without hazard to employees or customers.
 - Discarded clothing should not be left accessible to unauthorized scavengers while pending pickup.
- After cleaning the basement, make sure that all clothing and parts of the body that came in contact with the flood water are thoroughly washed in order to prevent the tracking of contaminated flood water into the living quarters of the house.

For more information visit the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department's webpage at: www.kalcounty.com/hcs or call the public health emergency hotline at (269) 373-5300. Additional information can also be found at www.ready.gov/floods.

###

Kalamazoo County Government
Health & Community Services Department

 [Like Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services](#)  Follow us [@KzooHealth](#)