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Social Services | Public Health | Behavioral Health

## news release

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### Local health officials provide flood-related guidance

As Humboldt County experiences localized flooding, health officials are reminding county residents about health risks related to flood waters and considerations for those reliant on individual water supplies and Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) in extreme weather events and power failures.

Contact with floodwater should be avoided, wherever possible, as it may contain untreated sewage or other harmful contaminants. Sewage overflows have been reported by local service districts as a result of stormwater infiltration exceeding the capacity of their facilities and may affect your area.

Washing hands with water known to be safe and changing into dry clothing and shoes, after incidental exposure to flood waters, will reduce concerns with communicable diseases.

Residents with water systems impacted by floodwaters should not consume the water until the water system has been tested to confirm that the water quality meets safe drinking water standards. As a temporary measure, bottled water may be used for drinking and cooking.

The Department of Health & Human Services, Public Health Branch, Division of Environmental Health's (DEH) ["Rainstorm Flooding Health Advisory and Clean-up Guidance" handout \(PDF\)](#) has information on health hazards related to flooding and well disinfection methods.

Individuals with households or businesses served by nonstandard OWTS or pumping systems are advised to conserve capacity by reducing water use to all but essential needs such as drinking, cooking, handwashing and flushing toilets.

All OWTS in low-lying areas impacted by flooding may back up or operate sluggishly.

Time, drier weather and measures to alleviate flooding may improve the

operating conditions of the system. Components of the system including the septic tank, pumping chamber and disposal area should be inspected as they become exposed. Report continued poor operation or failure of the system to DEH.

For information about how to reenter your home after you have had flooding, check out this Centers for Disease Control and Prevention handout: [Safety Guidelines: Reentering Your Flooded Home | Floods | CDC](#).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency also has information about [returning home after a flood](#).

For more information, you can also contact DEH at 707-445-6215 or 1-800-963-9241.

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