

Health Unit Media Release

For immediate release: April 1, 2008



FLOODING

With the arrival of Spring and a heavier than normal snow pack, the risk of possible flooding is increasing. The Health Unit would like to advise residents that floodwaters are usually very dirty and maybe contaminated with sewage, manure, garbage and other sources of disease causing organisms.

When flooding occurs, your well may become contaminated with E. coli and thus may pose a health risk to your family. **Flooded wells must not be trusted as a safe drinking source until three consecutive water samples have been taken about a week apart, with all results within acceptable levels.** Disinfection of contaminated wells must be completed. If you suspect that your well is contaminated, do not drink or use the water without first bringing it to a rolling boil for one minute, cool and then store the water in clean containers for later use. Septic systems may not function properly when your property is flooded, and may result in a sewage backup into your home. Homes contaminated with floodwater may be contaminated with disease causing organisms and also support the growth of mould that can ruin your belongings and affect your health. Physical hazards such as electrical and heating dangers may be a result from these systems being damaged by floodwater. You should not enter areas where electrical systems have been affected by water.

Any food items contaminated by floodwater should not be used, with the exception of sealed canned goods that can be cleaned and disinfected prior to opening. If you have lost power, food in the refrigerator and freezer may no longer be safe to eat. Any meat, dairy, egg and mixed food products that have not maintained a temperature of 4°C should be discarded. Keep your refrigerator and freezer closed to help maintain the temperature. Your public health inspector can help you determine which foods you should through out.

It is important to protect yourself and your family where possible before your home is flooded. If you have ditches, storm drains and catch basins on your property and ensure they are clear so they can handle excess run off. Check your sump pump and ensure it is in working order. If possible have a back up power supply. Ensure eaves troughs and downspouts are free to drain water away from your home.

Pick up water sample bottles from a local health unit office if you have a private well and test your water.

Information on floods and cleanup following floods is available from the health unit by calling 613-345-5685 in Brockville area or 613-283-2740 in Smiths Falls or visiting our website at www.healthunit.org/emergency or http://www.getprepared.ca/risks/on_e.asp.

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Contact: **Jane Lyster, Director of Health Protection, 613-345-5685**
Andy Howarth, Supervisor of Health Protection, 613-283-2740 or 1-800-660-5853