For Immediate Release
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St. Louis County Department of Public Health Urges Caution during Flooding and Flood Cleanup

ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MO – (June 6, 2019) The St. Louis County Department of Public Health is reminding all residents to be cautious while flood waters remain and to follow all recommended protocols in the cleanup that will follow. Most accidents and injuries that occur due to a natural disaster happen during the cleanup that follows the event.

Flood waters and standing water can pose various risks to public health, including infectious diseases, chemical hazards, and injuries from hidden objects. Flood waters can also contain raw sewage and eating or drinking anything contaminated by flood water can lead to diarrheal illness.

To protect yourself, your family, and others, the department is strongly urging everyone to heed the following precautions while flood waters remain:

- Do not allow children or pets to play in flood waters or areas that have recently been flooded.
- Check regularly on outdoor pets to make sure their area is free of flood water.
- Avoid wild animals that have been displaced by flood waters and remind children never to approach a wild animal.
- Check on elderly and homebound neighbors and relatives to make sure they are safe and aware of the dangers posed by flooding.
- Practice good hygiene (hand washing) after any contact with flood waters or items that have been in flood water.
- Wash children's hands frequently (especially before meals).
- Do not drive through flooded roadways and always pay attention to warning signs.

Once flood waters have receded and cleanup has begun, the department recommends the following precautions be heeded:

- Keep all children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.
- If re-entering a home or building for the first time after a flood (especially if there is still standing water) be alert for possible electrical shocks.
- Ensure that all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working as fires, gas leaks, and gas buildups are more common in these situations.
- Be alert for symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. The most common symptoms are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. They are often described as “flu-like”. Carbon monoxide can cause you to pass out and too much can kill you.
- Do not allow children or pets to play with toys that have been contaminated by flood water until after the toys have been disinfected.
- When cleaning up basements or other flood-affected areas, wear waterproof rubber boots, gloves, and goggles. Avoid ingestion of any flood water. Use bleach to disinfect and sanitize affected areas and use standard precautions while using bleach (avoid skin contact, inhalation, or ingestion).
- Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected (such as, mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and most paper products).
- Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters.
- Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (such as flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, and other plumbing fixtures) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent.
- Help the drying process by using fans, air conditioning units, and dehumidifiers.
- After completing the cleanup, wash your hands with soap and warm water. Use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands). Or you may use water that has been disinfected for personal hygiene use (solution of \( \frac{1}{8} \) teaspoon \( \approx 0.75 \) milliliters of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of \( \frac{1}{4} \) teaspoon \( \approx 1.5 \) milliliters) of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Wash all clothes worn during the cleanup in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from uncontaminated clothes and linens.
- Wash clothes contaminated with flood or sewage water in hot water and detergent. It is recommended that a laundromat be used for washing large quantities of clothes and linens until your onsite waste-water system has been professionally inspected and serviced.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

For more information about home cleanup following a flood, please visit the following website set up by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html

If you operate or work at a food service establishment that has been affected by flooding, the St. Louis County Department of Public Health has created the following fact sheet to help guide cleanup efforts:

www.stlouisco.com/Portals/8/docs/Health/Food%20Center/Flood.pdf

Additionally, The St. Louis County Department of Public Health recommends that people consider getting a tetanus booster if it has been more than 10 years since the last one.

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