

Oct. 28, 2020

STORM RELATED HEALTH RISKS

Tips On How To Protect Your Family

Contact:

Media Desk: PIO.CHD17@flhealth.gov



Pensacola, Fla. – As tropical weather impacts our area, it is important to be prepared for storm related health risks. Due to hazards from Hurricane Zeta, the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) emphasizes the importance of Florida’s residents and visitors protecting themselves against illness and injury. Everyone should remain diligent in preventative measures detailed below.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Dangers: Generator Safety Precautions Can Help Prevent Poisoning

- **Do Not** burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- **Never** use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows, or using fans, will not prevent CO build-up in the home.
- **Always** keep portable generators or gasoline engines outside and away from open windows, doors, window air conditioners or exhaust vents that could allow CO to come indoors. Follow the instructions that come with your unit. Place your generator and any gasoline-powered engine outside at least **20 feet** from any window, door or vent.
- **Install** battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home per the manufacturer’s installation instructions. The CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, ASTM D6332, or CSA 6.19.01).
- **Test** your CO alarms per the manufacturer’s recommendations and replace dead batteries.
- **Remember** you cannot see or smell CO. Portable generators can produce high levels of CO very quickly.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air **right away. Do not delay.**
- **If you suspect CO poisoning, call your nearest Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.**

Flood Water Safety

- **Moving Flood Water:** During flooding, the greatest threat comes from moving water. The deeper the moving water, the greater the threat. People should avoid driving in moving water, regardless of the size of the vehicle.
- **Pooling Flood Water:** Heavy rain causes flood waters to rise and pool on streets and throughout neighborhoods. In these situations, be aware of the following:
 - Road surfaces become disguised and drivers can unknowingly steer into a deep body of water, such as a canal or pond.
 - Electricity from streetlights and power poles may be present in standing water, causing a deadly shock to anyone coming in contact with it.
 - Children playing in contaminated standing water can become sick or be bitten by snakes or floating insects.
 - People coming into contact with floodwaters should thoroughly wash and rinse any exposed body parts with soap and disinfected water.

- **Contaminated Water Supply:** Drinking contaminated water may cause illness. Water in a hurricane-affected area may not be safe to drink. Listen to local announcements on safety of the water supply. If the public water system lost pressure, a boil water notice will likely be issued for your area. People in these areas should take precautions to avoid consuming contaminated water. If your well is in a flooded area, your water may contain disease-causing bacteria and may not be safe to drink. The Florida Department of Health recommends one of the following:
 - Boil water for at least 1 minute before using it for drinking, cooking, making ice, brushing teeth, or washing dishes.
 - Disinfect water by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 tsp – this would form a puddle about the size of a dime) of unscented household bleach per gallon of water, and then let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy after 30 minutes, repeat the procedure. Use a container that has a cap or cover for disinfecting and storing water to be used for drinking. This will prevent contamination.
 - Use only bottled water, especially for mixing baby formula.

Food Safety: Preventing Foodborne Diseases

- People should not eat any food that may have come into contact with contaminated water from floods or tidal surges.
- Commercially prepared cans of food should not be eaten if there is a bulging or opening on the can or screw caps, soda bottle tops or twist-caps.
- Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if labels are removed and cans are disinfected in a bleach solution. Use 1/4 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water; re-label the cans including expiration date and type of food. Assume that home-canned food is unsafe.
- Infants should preferably be breast fed or fed only pre-mixed canned baby formula. Do not use powdered formulas prepared with untreated water, use bottled or boiled water instead.
- When the power is out, refrigerators will keep foods cool for approximately 4 hours. Thawed and refrigerated foods should be thrown out after 4 hours.

Sanitation and Hygiene: Preventing Waterborne Illness

- Basic hygiene is very important during this emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water. Use only water that has been boiled or disinfected for washing hands before eating, after toilet use, after helping in cleanup activities and after handling items contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Flood water may contain fecal matter from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and disinfected or boiled water.
- Apply antibiotic cream to reduce the risk of infection. If a wound or sore develops redness, swelling or drainage, see a physician.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater. They can be exposed to water contaminated with fecal matter.
- Do not allow children to play with toys that have been in floodwater until the toys have been disinfected. Use 1/4 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water to disinfect toys and other items.

Power Outages: Preventing Fire Hazards

- Using battery-powered lanterns and flashlights is preferred.
- NEVER use candles.

Post Flood Clean-up

- Clean up debris carefully to avoid injury and contamination.

- Chainsaws should only be operated in safe conditions (not in water soaked areas) and by people who are experienced in proper use.
- Lift heavy debris by bending knees and using legs to help lift.
- Wear shoes to avoid injury to the feet from glass, nails or other sharp objects.
- Avoid contact with downed power lines.
- Be alert to wildlife (snakes, alligators, etc.) that may have been displaced as a result of the flood or storm. If you see a snake or other wildlife, back away from it slowly and do not touch it. If the snake is in your home, immediately call the animal control agency in your county.

Clearing Standing Water: Preventing Mosquito-borne Illness

- Heavy rains and flooding can lead to an increase in mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are most active at sunrise and sunset.

DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once to twice a week. Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and keep appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent.

- Clothing - Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people working in areas where mosquitoes are present.
- Repellent - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. See Tips on Repellent Use below for additional instructions related to children.
 - Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and IR3535 are effective.
 - Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house.

- Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups.
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before you apply a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) are generally recommended. Other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved repellents contain picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or IR3535.

These products are generally available at local pharmacies. Look for active ingredients to be listed on the product label.

- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of three years. DEET is not recommended on children younger than two months old.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Again, always follow the manufacturer's directions.

For more information, please contact FDOH-Escambia or visit www.floridahealth.gov or www.FloridaDisaster.org. Also, visit the following websites for other state and federal information on emergency and disaster planning: www.redcross.org, www.ready.gov or www.fema.gov.

###

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyEscambia](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.