

Following a Flood (3 pages)

Insurance and practical household advice

- Don't dispose of damaged goods until your insurers have had a chance to inspect them.
- Don't trust bogus traders. Always get a written quotation; your insurer will require one. Make sure that it is on letter headed paper with landline contact numbers and an address you know exists. Never pay in advance and only pay when the work is done to your satisfaction. Always get a receipt.
- Don't use electrical circuits or equipment exposed to floodwater until checked by a qualified electrician.
- After flooding, do not reconnect gas, electricity or water services until systems are checked by an accredited engineer. Dry out appliances affected by floodwater and get a qualified electrician, CORGI registered gas engineer or plumber to inspect before use.
- Remove any coverings on airbricks once the flood has passed, as ventilation is essential to dry wall cavities.
- Any food businesses are required to ensure that prior to opening their business that the premises are thoroughly disinfected and that any food stuffs that are contaminated or likely to have been contaminated during the flood is properly disposed of. For further advice or assistance please contact the Environmental Health Division of Orkney Islands Council on 01856 873535.



Protecting against infection

The floodwater affecting your home or other property may be contaminated with sewage, animal waste and other contaminants. However, infection problems arising from floods in the UK are actually rare. Although harmful micro-organisms in flood water are very diluted and present a low risk, there are a few precautions to be aware of when dealing with flooding which should prevent unnecessary additional health problems. If you follow the basic advice below you should not experience any additional health problems.



- Floodwater and sewage often leaves a muddy deposit however, experience from previous flooding and sewage contamination has shown that any risk to health is small (You do not need any booster immunisations or antibiotics)
- Always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, before eating or preparing food, after being in contact with flood water, sewage or items that have been contaminated by these, or participating in flood clean up activities
- Don't allow children to play in flood water areas and wash children's hands frequently (always before meals)
- Wash floodwater-contaminated toys with hot water or disinfect before allowing them to be used
- Keep any open cuts or sores clean and prevent them from being exposed to flood water, wear waterproof plasters

Continued on next page

Following a Flood (cont.)

- Harmful bacteria may be present in sewage and animal slurry, and this can pass into flood water, although there is likely to be substantial dilution. If anyone does develop a stomach upset following direct flooding or contact with sewage ensure they seek medical advice
- If the flood water contained oil, diesel etc this should in the main be removed with the floodwater and silt. Any remaining oil / diesel contamination, in areas that are accessible, can be removed by using a detergent solution and washing the surface down. In inaccessible areas such as under floor boards, it may present an odour problem but it is not necessarily a health hazard
- Further advice should be sought from the Environmental Health Division of Orkney Islands Council if the odour persists or if you are particularly concerned about it for other reasons. Contact details listed below
- Whilst in the property, floorboards, walls etc will continue to dry out, any loose material or dust resulting from this should be vacuumed up on a regular basis
- Very young children should avoid playing directly on timber floorboards or any damaged tiled floors if possible and be aware of the risk of injury from sharp edges on tiles or raised nails in the floorboards until these have been repaired
- Help for vulnerable and elderly people returning to their houses may be available from Orkney Islands Council
- Contact your doctor if you become ill after accidentally ingesting (swallowing) mud or contaminated water and tell them your house was flooded.
- Frozen food that has been at room temperature for a few hours should be discarded. Put contaminated flood damaged food in black plastic refuse sacks, seal and dispose of it in accordance with local advice. Check with insurers before disposal.
- Don't be tempted to try and salvage damaged food, including tins as they may be contaminated with sewage and chemicals left from the flood water.

Gardens and play areas

Do not let young children play on affected grassed or paved areas until they have been cleaned down and restored to their normal condition.

Sunlight and soil help destroy harmful bacteria and any excess risk to health should disappear completely within a week or so. (The best way of protecting health is to always wash your hands before eating or preparing food).



Following a Flood (cont.)

If Your Drinking Water Becomes Contaminated

Scottish Water Contact: **08000 778778**

Orkney Islands Council - Environmental Health Contact: **01856 873535**



People whose drinking water comes through a mains supply should follow the advice of Scottish Water regarding the safety of their water supply. Water companies have a duty to take all necessary steps to protect public health. If a water treatment works becomes flooded alternative supplies are normally available but consumers may be advised to boil water before drinking or temporarily refrain from using water for domestic purposes.

If you notice a change in water quality, such as the water becomes discoloured or there is a change in taste or smell, or if you are unsure, phone Scottish Water. If in doubt, boil all water intended for drinking or use bottled water.

If you have been advised to boil your water, then boil all water for drinking, brushing teeth, washing food, and making ice.

Boiling water kills pathogenic bacteria, viruses and parasites that may be present in water. Bring water to the boil and then allow it to cool before drinking. It can be stored in a clean jug covered by a saucer in a cool place (preferably in the fridge). Ice should be made from water prepared for drinking.

Water from the hot tap is not suitable for drinking, Ensure the water taps are cleaned and disinfected before using them for the first time.

If there is a bottle-fed baby in the house, make sure their water is boiled and do not use bottled water unless it is recommended by a doctor or health visitor, as some bottled water is unsuitable for babies as it contains too many salts for their immature kidneys to manage.

If your water is from a private supply such as a well or spring, check that it has not been affected by floodwater. If a private well or spring has been covered by flood water, if the water changes colour or taste, or you believe the supply has been affected by the flood then boil (or otherwise treat) the water. Continue to boil the water until the supply has been tested and shown to be safe. For tests or further advice contact the Environmental Health Division of Orkney Islands Council.