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**General questions:** Patrick O'Neill, DHS, (971) 673-1282

**Technical questions:** Michael Heumann, DHS, (503) 880-2226

### **Oregon health officials offer flooding safety tips**

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Public health officials remind people to be cautious during flooding and as they return to flood and wind-damaged homes to assess damages and make repairs.

"It's important for people to be aware of flooding safety issues," said Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., acting state public health director in the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Never attempt to drive through a flooded area. Muddy water over the road can hide road markers and disguise potholes and washouts. As little as one foot of water can move most cars off the road, and as little as six inches of fast-moving flood water can sweep pedestrians off their feet. Many flood-related deaths are caused by people attempting to drive through floodwaters.

Flood water may contain debris, sewage, dirt, oil or other potentially hazardous materials. To avoid harm, Kohn advises:

- Always wash hands with soap and clean tap water before preparing or eating food, after using the toilet and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage. If clean tap water is not available wash your hands in water that has been boiled or disinfected.
- If there's any chance your water has been contaminated, use boiled, disinfected or bottled water for drinking and cooking. To make water safe for drinking, bring it to a rolling boil for one minute. If your water is not cloudy or discolored, you can also use 5-10 drops of household bleach per gallon to disinfect. Let the treated water stand for at least 20 minutes before using.

- Watch for and stay away from downed power lines, or broken and hanging tree limbs.
- Be careful when working around fallen trees. They can shift suddenly and may conceal additional hazards underneath. Consult trained professionals for safe assistance.
- Use caution when re-entering buildings that have been flooded, due to potential structural damage. Broken glass may be concealed in debris and mud or scattered in places not easily seen.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves when removing mud and other flood debris.
- Be aware that electricity may still be turned on and wet surfaces create a risk of electrocution. Additionally, do not turn on an electrical system that has been flooded.
- If the building has shifted and is supplied with natural gas, check for possible gas leaks. If there is a leak, evacuate the area immediately and contact emergency officials.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/spotlight/2009extremeweather.shtml>