

## POST-FLOODING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Flooding from Tropical Storm Lee has devastated communities in much of the central and eastern part of Pennsylvania and left countless families and businesses facing unbelievable destruction. If you or someone you know has been impacted by the devastating flooding, the information in this document will help you to safely start recovering from this tragedy.

### FOOD AND WATER SAFETY

#### Food

- **When in doubt, throw it out!** Throw away food that may have come in contact with floodwater – like:
  - Home-canned foods.
  - All foods in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, cellophane (plastic wrap) or cloth.
  - Meat, poultry, eggs or fish.
  - Spices, seasonings, extracts, flour, sugar, grain, coffee and other staples in canisters.
  - Unopened jars with waxed cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing. Also, throw away preserves sealed with paraffin wax.
  - Throw away any fruits and vegetables that have been in contact with floodwaters – including those that have not been harvested from gardens.
  - Wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.
- You do **NOT** need to throw away the following items if they have been in contact with floodwater:
  - Commercially canned foods that came into contact with floodwater and have been properly cleaned by: labeling cans with the name of food in permanent marker; removing labels; washing cans in water containing detergent; soaking cans for at least one minute in chlorine solution; rinsing in clean, cool water; placing on sides to dry (do not stack cans).
  - Dishes and glassware if they are sanitized by boiling in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.
- If electricity at your home has been off for long periods of time, throw away perishable foods (like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, leftovers, etc.) that have been above 40 degrees for two hours or more.

#### Water

- Local authorities will tell you if tap water is safe to drink or use for cooking or bathing.
- If the water is unsafe, authorities may issue “boil water advisories” or tell you to use bottled water. Follow boil water advisories exactly to safely disinfect tap water before using it. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, cooking, food preparation, dishwashing, making ice and coffee, mixing baby formula and brushing teeth.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that come in contact with floodwater with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling these items in clean water, or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.
- If your private water well has been flooded, follow the disinfection instructions found in the flood-related information tab on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s website or call the toll-free number, both of which can be found at the bottom of this fact sheet.

#### Restaurants

- Restaurant and food facilities inspected by the state, and hit by floodwaters, must be inspected by the Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Food Safety prior to reopening.

### Crops

- Farmers whose crops have been submerged in floodwaters need to have crops tested. Farmers should contact their local county Agriculture extension office for testing.
- Farmers whose crops have been harvested for forage and were submerged should also be tested before use. Farmers can contact local county Agriculture extension offices or the Department of Agriculture.

## **PREVENTING AND TREATING OTHER ILLNESSES OR INJURIES AFTER FLOODING**

### Coping After a Disaster

- The days and weeks after an emergency are going to be rough. Some sleeplessness, anxiety, anger, hyperactivity, mild depression or lethargy are normal and may go away with time. If you or your loved ones feel any of these symptoms severely, seek counseling.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's **Mental Health Crisis Counseling Hotline (1-866-803-6382)** is also available to help citizens cope with mental health issues related to Tropical Storm Lee. The service is available to all Pennsylvanians and is staffed by trained crisis workers 24 hours a day during the immediate crisis period.

### Avoid Floodwater and Mosquitoes

- Avoid contact with floodwater, which contains contaminants (things like sewage, fuel and hazardous chemicals) and debris from flooded homes, businesses and industrial sites.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Health does not recommend vaccinating all flood survivors against tetanus. If you receive a puncture wound or have a wound that has come in contact with potentially contaminated floodwater, contact a health care provider promptly and ask if you need a tetanus booster or vaccine.
- Prevent mosquito bites by wearing long pants, socks, and long-sleeved shirts and by using insect repellents that contain DEET or Picaridin. To control mosquito populations, drain all standing water left in open containers – such as flower pots or buckets – outside your home or business.

### Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is produced by many types of equipment and is poisonous to breathe. **Never** use a gas-powered pump or generator, pressure washer, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement or garage or near a window, door or vent. If your carbon monoxide detector sounds, leave your home immediately and call 9-1-1. Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed or nauseous.

### Wash your Hands

- Use soap and warm water to wash your hands. If water isn't available, use alcohol-based sanitizer.

### Treat Wounds

- Clean out all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Contact a doctor to find out whether more treatment is needed (such as a tetanus shot). If a wound gets red, swells, or drains, seek immediate medical attention.

## **TAKE PRECAUTIONS WHEN REENTERING/CLEANING OUT HOMES AND BUILDINGS**

### **Wear Protective Gear for Cleanup Work**

- The CDC recommends wearing hard hats, goggles, heavy work gloves and watertight boots with steel toes and insoles (not just steel shank). Wear earplugs or protective headphones to reduce risk from equipment noise.

### **Prevent Mold Growth**

- Be careful when entering a flood-damaged building. Loose, wet ceiling plaster is heavy and dangerous, so knock down hanging plaster before moving around.
- Clean up and dry out flooded buildings within 24 to 48 hours if possible. Open doors and windows and use fans to speed drying. To prevent mold growth, clean wet items and surfaces with detergent and water. To remove mold growth, wear rubber gloves, open windows and doors, and clean with a bleach solution of one cup of bleach in one gallon of water. Throw away porous items – like carpet, mattresses and upholstered furniture – that cannot be dried quickly.
- Everything that floodwater has touched should be disinfected. Scrub down walls and any other smooth, hard surfaces with the same bleach-water solution.
- Do not rush to move back into your home. Before a house is habitable, it must be dried and thoroughly cleaned, since floodwaters pick up sewage and chemicals as they travel.

### **Avoid/Identify Structural Damage**

- Do not pump the basement until the water has gone down, as pumping a water-filled basement could result in the walls collapsing.
- Contact your local code enforcement officer to inspect homes and other buildings for structural damage.
- A maintenance company or Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry inspector should inspect:
  - Flooded buildings with elevators.
  - Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanks that were under water.
  - Any boiler that was under water.
  - Service stations with dispensing equipment (gas pumps, etc.) that were under water.

### **Safely Dispose of Hazardous Materials**

- When cleaning up, dispose of chemicals or other hazardous materials safely – never in creeks, streams or rivers. Do not put hazardous materials in large community dumpsters or in your household trash. Follow local municipal authority guidance regarding hazardous material collection points.

### **Avoid Electrocutation**

- Once inside a flood-ravaged building, turn off the gas and electricity. Wear rubber-soled shoes or boots and rubber gloves and turn off the main switch using a piece of rubber, plastic or dry wood while standing on a dry board to avoid electrocution.
- Do not touch downed power lines or other wires, and do not touch any water into which a power line has fallen.

## **INSURANCE TIPS**

### **Homeowners/Flood Insurance**

- Call your company or agent as soon as you are back into your home. Keep a diary of all of your conversations with your insurance company.

- Insurance company disaster teams are in Pennsylvania now, but be patient and ask for a timeframe on when they can view the damage and help you.
- In the meantime, take pictures of the damage and secure the problems so further damage does not occur. **Do not make any permanent repairs until your carrier says you can.**
- Keep all receipts. Be aware that multiple claims in a short time frame could result in a premium increase, so consider taking care of minor repairs on your own.
- Avoid contractor scams and anyone who may knock on your door to help you with your clean-up or claims.
  - Get more than one bid from contractors and ask for references.
  - Ask for proof of necessary licenses, building permits, insurance and bonding.
  - Record the contractor's license plate and driver's license number.
  - Never pay upfront for the entire job. You can always go with the contractor and pay for supplies directly.
- Flood damage to your vehicle is covered under your auto insurance policy if you have "comprehensive" coverage.
- If the first offer made by the insurance company does not meet your expectations, be prepared to negotiate. If you believe you are being treated unfairly, call the Pennsylvania Insurance Department at 1-877-881-6388.

### **Crop Insurance**

- Those dealing with flood-related crop damage should note the following:
  - If participating in a federally-sponsored crop insurance plan, you must notify an agent within 72 hours of discovery of crop damage.
  - All residue and crop damage should be left intact until insurance agents can properly assess extent of damage.
  - Individuals should contact Karen Powell at 717-705-9511 or their crop insurance agent with crop insurance questions.
  - Contact the Department of Agriculture at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Agriculture desk at 717-651-2062.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Federal/State Assistance**

- At this time, there is no federal assistance for homeowners and renters as a result of this flooding incident.
- Local, county, state and federal teams will be conducting joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) as soon as it is safe to do so.
- PDA teams will be looking at damages for Public Assistance (PA) which applies primarily to infrastructure damages for local, county and state governments and certain non-profits.
- PDA teams will also look at damages for Individual Assistance (IA), which is made up of a number of federal programs designed to help citizens get back on their feet.
- For applicants who qualify, IA can include funds to repair damages, replace major appliances or pay for temporary housing.
- There is no state disaster assistance program.
- Right now, citizens should document any flood-related damages with photographs and detailed information on the losses they sustained. The PDA teams need that information if there is a disaster declaration that includes IA.
- Citizens are free to begin the repair and recovery process. Make sure to keep copies of any receipts from repairs.

- If we get a disaster declaration that includes IA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) will release information with instructions on how to apply.
- Citizens will be able to apply over the phone or internet. FEMA will also staff disaster recovery centers (DRC) in the counties included in the IA declaration.
- DRCs are one-stop shopping for citizens. They can get information on every available federal resource in order to recover from this devastating situation.

### Unemployment Claims

- Unemployment claims are being processed normally.
- Visit [www.uc.pa.gov](http://www.uc.pa.gov) to file an unemployment claim online.
- The Unemployment Compensation Service Center can be reached from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. each work day and Sundays 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at 888-313-7284. TTY service is available for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing at 888-334-4046. Videophone service for individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) is available every Wednesday from noon to 4 p.m. at 717-704-8474.

### Charity Scams

- Beware of charity scams. There are many legitimate organizations that help during disasters, but others prey on people's generosity.
- Be wary of high pressure tactics and door-to-door solicitations; ask how much of the donations will go to the intended purpose and how much will be spent on operating expenses and fundraising.
- Write checks directly to the charity; don't give cash donations.
- To check whether a charity is registered in Pennsylvania, call the Department of State's Bureau of Charitable Organizations at 1-800-732-0999, or visit [www.dos.state.pa.us](http://www.dos.state.pa.us) and click on "charities".

### Road Conditions

- Do not drive around highway barriers and road closed signs even if flood waters have receded. The roadway and bridges may have been damaged during flooding. Until PennDOT inspectors take a look, you cannot assume the roadway is safe to use.
- Be aware that there will be many detours and delays in the weeks ahead as crews repair damaged roadways, bridges and other transportation infrastructure. Please be patient and allow extra travel time in flood-damaged areas and slow down to keep road crews and fellow motorists safe.
- Do not put yourself in harm's way by visiting damaged sections of roadway for sightseeing or picture taking. Not only do you endanger yourself, you can delay workers from making much-needed repairs.
- Call 5-1-1 to check on road conditions before you head out.
- Keep an eye out for debris on roadways.

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Pennsylvania Department of Health • [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us) • 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency • [www.pema.state.pa.us](http://www.pema.state.pa.us)

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection • [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) • 1-866-255-5158

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture • [www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us)

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry • [www.dli.state.pa.us](http://www.dli.state.pa.us)

Pennsylvania Insurance Department • [www.ins.state.pa.us](http://www.ins.state.pa.us)

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation • [www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us) • [www.511pa.com](http://www.511pa.com)