



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Frederick County Health Department

## Sewage in Basement Spill Cleanup Guidelines

Frederick, MD (May 16, 2018) - As a result of a recent storm, if the sanitary sewer lateral that services your home surcharged resulting in raw sewage in the basement, the department recommends the following:

Any and all areas containing sewage should be remediated as soon as possible in order to maintain a healthy living environment. Thorough cleaning of indoor sewage spills is necessary to protect people and pets from harmful bacteria and viruses. Clean-up must begin as soon as possible to reduce the risk of exposure to sewage and to prevent mold growth.

This document should assist you in developing an adequate remediation plan. The affected area can be disinfected in accordance with the following procedure after the sewage has been removed and disposed of in an acceptable manner. There are also professional cleaning service companies that can be contracted to do the clean-up.

**Warning: chlorine bleach can destroy various materials.** Not all surfaces and materials are compatible with a bleach solution. The department recommends that you test an inconspicuous area for compatibility prior to use.

### Clean up tips:

- Keep children and pets out of the area until clean-up has been completed.
- Wear protective clothing including rubber gloves and rubber boots and be cautious when cleaning.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and launder clothes separately after completing the clean-up.
- Remove all furniture, loose rugs, and so on from the area.
- Saturated wall-to-wall carpeting (and the pad) **usually cannot be adequately cleaned.** They should be removed, wrapped in plastic, and disposed of in the municipal garbage. If you decide to keep the carpeting, hire a licensed carpet cleaning company to steam clean and disinfect the carpet.
- All hard surfaces, such as linoleum, hardwood floors, concrete, wood moldings, wood, and metal furniture, and on should be thoroughly cleaned with hot water and a mild detergent (dish detergent), and then rinsed with a bleach solution by mixing eight ounces of liquid household bleach to one gallon of water. Let the surface air dry.
- Upholstered furniture, loose rugs, drapery, and so on should be professionally cleaned. Notify the cleaner of the problem.
- Remove and replace plaster, plasterboard, and lath that have been saturated and are soft to the touch. If the surface has been wetted, clean as you would a hard surface, but do not saturate the plaster.
- Clean sinks, dishwashers, and other plumbing fixtures that have had sewage back-up with detergent, and then rinse with the bleach solution.
- Disinfect clean-up mops, brooms, and brushes with the bleach solution.
- Increase air circulation to reduce odors and mold growth -- open all windows and doors. The use of fans and heaters may speed this process.



Barbara A. Brookmyer, M.D., M.P.H. ▪ Health Officer

---

350 Montevue Lane ▪ Frederick, MD 21702

Phone: 301-600-1029 ▪ Fax: 301-600-3111 ▪ MD TTY: 1-800-735-2258





## Sewage in Basement Spill Cleanup Guidelines/Page 2

- Throw out items that absorb water and cannot be cleaned or disinfected. This includes mattresses, carpeting, cosmetics, stuffed animals and baby toys.
- Throw out all food, beverages and medicine exposed to flood waters and mud. When in doubt, throw it out. This includes canned goods, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and containers with food or liquid that has been sealed shut.

If household bleach is utilized as a disinfecting agent a concentration of 3,750 mg/l or parts per million (ppm) available chlorine should be utilized to provide an effective disinfection rate.

A 3,750-ppm available chlorine solution can be produced by adding one cup (eight (8) ounces) of household bleach (6%) to one gallon of tap water. Not all surfaces and materials are compatible with a bleach solution. **The department recommends that you test an inconspicuous area for compatibility prior to use.** Keep the bleach solution on the treated material for a minimum of six hours. Increasing airflow by using fans or opening windows will assist in drying out the area.

All safety precautions contained on the bleach bottle and within the attached document should be followed when handling any bleach solution. Never mix bleach with any other cleaning product; toxic fumes may be produced. Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of affected areas. Keep family members, especially children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.


Any disposable sewage infested articles such as paper or cardboard, should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in the municipal garbage. If paper records are valuable, they can be photocopied prior to disposal.

Wash your hands with soap and water, thoroughly and often. This is especially important before handling food, eating, or smoking. If possible, use an antibacterial soap on your hands.

Additional guidance can be found online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/after.html>.


### Flood Cleanup and the Air in Your Home

**Flood water can make the air in your home unhealthy.**




This is because when things get wet for more than 2 days they usually get moldy. There may also be germs and bugs in your home after a flood.

**Clean and dry your house and everything in it.**



Clean and dry hard surfaces. Throw away anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned.



**What to wear when cleaning:**



- ✓ A N-95 respirator (found at Hardware stores)
- ✓ Goggles
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and
- ✓ boots or work shoes

**Use portable generators OUTSIDE and far away from the building.**

The exhaust, or fumes, from a portable generator could kill you in minutes if you breathe it in!



**EPA** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) free hotline 1-888-283-7626. Find more on the EPA website [www.epa.gov/sandy](http://www.epa.gov/sandy)

EPA 402-H-07-001

<https://archive.epa.gov/region02/sandy/web/pdf/floodcleanupandairinyourhome.pdf>