

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Sewage Spill Clean-up Tips

Clean-up Instructions

If you experience a major sewerage back-up in your home or business report the situation to your sewerage provider. If the amount of sewerage is small you may be able to clean it up yourself; if the back-up is large enough to require siphoning and pumping you should contact a contractor who is qualified to clean-up and decontaminate the area.

Safety Hazards from Sewage Back-up

The greatest danger when you are trying to stop a sewer back-up and clean it up is the risk of electrocution or explosion.

- Do not enter a flooded basement or light matches until the utility companies have shut off the gas and electric service.
- If flood waters or sewage fill your basement, you must clean properly to prevent you and your family from becoming sick or injured.
- Do not bring children into the flooded area during clean-up.
- If you experience a sewer backup, it is recommended that a professionally trained restoration firm be utilized. If it is a small event and you prefer to do the work yourself, the following are suggestions on how to clean up a flood or sewage problem:

Cleaning and Sanitizing

1. Wear personal protective equipment including long sleeves, long pants, gloves and disposable booties.
2. Drain all flood waters and/or sewage by natural draining or pumping.
3. Remove dirt, soil and debris from surfaces that came in contact with flood waters.
4. Wash down all walls, floors and surfaces that the flood water or sewage touched with clean, warm or hot water and a low suds detergent.
5. Rinse again with warm or hot water.
6. Sanitize by rinsing the walls, floors and surfaces using one of the following mixtures:
 - a. Standard homeowner liquid disinfectants at concentrations recommended by the manufacturer.
 - b. Eight (8) tablespoons of laundry bleach (i.e., Clorox) in each gallon of water used.

This is a sample guideline furnished to you by Glatfelter Public Practice. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing risk exposure to personnel. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your GPP Risk Control Representative.

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7. During the cleaning and following the disinfection aggressively air the area with fans, and open windows.
8. Operate dehumidifiers in the area.
9. Prevent tracking flood debris and sewage into clean areas.
10. Persons engaged in cleaning operations should be particularly aware of their personal hygiene. Contaminated fingers should be kept away from eyes, nose and mouth. Do not smoke because soiled fingers carry disease germs to the cigarette and then to the mouth.
11. After clean up, make sure that all clothing and parts of the body that came in contact with the flood waters and sewage are thoroughly washed. Wash hands frequently, thoroughly and immediately afterwards.

Utilities

The following guidelines should be followed when entering a flooded area with gas and/or electricity present:

1. Have the utility companies shut off the gas and electricity.
2. Do Not touch the fuse box or any plugged in cords or appliances until the electricity is shut off.
3. If an electrical appliance motor or its controls are submerged under water, do not start it until consulting with the dealer or service company.
4. Do not relight appliances until checked by the gas company. Make sure all pilot lights are on before relighting burners.
5. Do not light matches until the gas is turned off. If there is a gas leak, it could cause an explosion.

Clothing and Bedding

1. Heavily contaminated clothing, carpets, furniture, toys and/or bedding should be discarded.
2. Discarded clothing should be placed in a tightly closed container until pick-up or disposal.
3. Movable objects could be put outdoors to be cleaned and dried in the sunlight.

Note: This guidance was compiled from various state and local health agencies. Although this outline may be sufficient for your community's needs, contact your local health agency for further suggestions.

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