Flooded Area Safety and Sanitation Overview

When flooding of an area has occurred due to heavy rains or sewer backups, important steps must be taken to assure the health and safety of the residents. It should be assumed that all surfaces have been contaminated. This will guide safety procedures taken during cleanup and decisions regarding the salvaging of flooded materials.

General Safety Issues:
1. Be certain that there is no electrical hazard. If unsure, contact the local building department. Always wear rubber boots in flooded areas.
2. Turn off main switches and unplug any electrical appliance.
3. DO NOT turn on any appliances that have been wet until they have been thoroughly dried and checked by a professional for proper operation.
4. DO NOT use matches or any other open flame until the Gas Company has checked the area. The gas supply to all appliances in flooded areas should be shut off until the appliance has been checked.

Personal Protective Equipment:
1. Only persons essential in the cleanup should be in the affected area. Children and pets should not be allowed in the area or permitted to play in the floodwater.
2. Rubber boots and rubber gloves should be worn at all times. In cases where there may be a potential of contact of the floodwaters with the mouth or eyes (potential of splashing), a dust mask and eye protection should be worn.
3. Adequately ventilate the area when cleaning with a bleach solution. DO NOT mix the bleach solution with ammonia as it could create toxic fumes.
4. DO NOT expose cuts or open sores to the floodwaters.
5. DO NOT eat, smoke or drink during cleanup. WASH HANDS OFTEN AND THOROUGHLY.

Cleanup Procedures:
1. Utilize the above personal protection and safety precautions.
2. Determine what items will be discarded and remove them for disposal. Stuffed furniture, pillows, and mattresses should be discarded, as it will be difficult to properly disinfect these items. It may be necessary to discard carpeting and padding.
3. Thoroughly rinse all visible soil from all items to be salvaged. Rinse the walls from above the level the water reached to the floor. Carefully hose behind any base hoping to remove all soil. Hose down the entire floor.
4. Prepare a bleach solution utilizing 1 ½ cups of bleach to 1 gallon of water. Smaller items may be immersed in this solution. Hand scrub larger items with the solution. Pour this solution on walls several inches above the highest water level reached by floodwaters and
over the entire floor. Make sure all affected areas come in contact with this solution. You may wish to use a broom or mop to accomplish this task.

5. If the water has reached more than a few inches above the floor, you may wish to contact a professional company to do the cleanup. Companies are listed in the yellow pages of your local phone book under Fire/ Water Damage.

6. Allow the bleach solution to come in contact with the affected area for 15 minutes.

7. Using various methods, dry all surfaces thoroughly. The wettest areas can be squeegeed or mopped to a floor drain. A wet/dry vacuum can be used on flat surfaces to further remove water. Use fans and dehumidifiers to dry all surfaces.

8. Replace disposable furnace filters or clean permanent filters with a bleach solution to reduce any mold spores. Check damaged areas for mold growth and eliminate accordingly. Further information is available regarding mold.

For further assistance, you may wish to contact the Summit County Emergency Management Agency at 330-643-2558 or the American Red Cross at 330-535-2542.