

## **FACT SHEET: Hazardous Substances Encountered in Flood Damage Cleanup**

When returning to your home and neighborhood after a flood and while you are cleaning up flooded areas, be aware of potential chemical hazards. These include many common household products, garden and yard chemicals and occasionally industrial and agricultural hazardous materials.

### Household Waste

Many household products are hazardous or contain hazardous materials. Flooding may result in increased exposure potential and danger by destroying label information or by spilling, damaging or destroying the container.

### Garden, Yard and Farm Chemicals

Most homes have a supply of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemical products that can become especially hazardous during and after flooding. If you did not have such materials before the flood, they may have been brought to your property by flood waters.

### Industrial and Agricultural Chemicals

Some homesites have large quantities of stored materials that are potentially hazardous during and after flooding. Flood waters can move quantities of hazardous industrial or agricultural chemicals from one site to another, so your homesite may have hazardous materials that were not present before the flood. Flood damaged debris from your home and property can be placed in normal garbage or taken to regular waste collection and transfer stations. Hazardous materials should be taken to specially designated hazardous waste collection centers. There are six to ten such collection sites in the Portland area, and others located near major cities in other parts of Oregon. For specific information about these centers, call the City of Portland, Metro, or the closest State Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) office.

### Electrical Hazards

Be sure the electrical power supply to any flooded building is turned off before you enter or work in the building. You may need to contact your electric utility company for advice or assistance with this.

### Personal Protective Clothing and Protective Devices

While doing flood cleanup always be sure to wear impervious gloves, waterproof boots, long sleeves and full length pants. If you are working in water or with very wet materials your clothing is likely to become wet, so you should wear rain gear or other waterproof overclothing. Ventilate cleanup areas carefully before entering any enclosed space. Discontinue work if you become exposed to hazardous chemicals or

if you develop symptoms of exposure or illness.

### Medical Attention

If you become injured or ill while doing flood cleanup or if you know that you have been exposed to a dangerous chemical you should discontinue work, remove contaminated clothing, wash exposed skin with soap and water, and call your doctor or the Oregon Poison Center (ph. 1-800-222-1222). The more information you have about the chemical, the hazards it poses, and details of your exposure when you call, the better medical advice you will receive.

### Exhaust and Combustion Device Hazards

If you use gasoline or fuel burning engines, heaters or lighting devices in enclosed spaces, be sure you have adequate fresh air flow through the area to remove exhaust vapors and to provide safe breathing conditions. Engines, heaters and lighting equipment that burn fuels will remove oxygen from the air and produce carbon monoxide and other vapors that can be very harmful or even lethal to humans and animals.

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### Technical Advice and Information:

State Public Health Division

Office of Environmental Public Health - Environmental Toxicology Section

800 NE Oregon St, Ste 640

Portland, OR 97232

Ph. 971-673-0440

Fax. 971-673-0440

URL. <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/ophs/index.shtml>