

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services

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Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services is concerned about the health and safety of Harris County residents as we recover from Hurricane Ike. The attached contains important information that will help our neighbors in their recovery efforts as a result of Hurricane Ike.

Health & Safety Information after a Disaster

Prevent Personal Illness and Injury

Most importantly protect yourself and your family. Be very careful and cautious around your home and property because of debris and other hazards.

- Be aware of your tetanus status. Make sure you are up-to-date with your tetanus vaccine.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water to prevent possible illness, if this is not possible, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Be careful around storm debris such as tree branches, broken glass, and structural debris.
- Be aware of possible downed power lines, natural gas or propane tanks.
- Avoid wading in standing water which may contain debris or fire ants.

HCPHES Main Number (713) 439-6000

Environmental Public Health

Flood Safety

- Avoid flooded areas and flood waters at all times (accidental drowning and other potential health risks such as hepatitis).
- Do not allow children to play in flood waters.
- Be aware of snakes, insects and animals driven to higher ground by flood waters.
- Clean all items touched by floodwaters, including children's toys.

- Throw away items that cannot be washed (such as mattresses, stuffed animals, baby toys, and wood cutting boards).
- Throw away items that may have come in contact with flood waters.
- Seek immediate attention if you become ill.

Water Safety

- Do not enter waters that you cannot see through, they may have a swift undercurrent or may contain debris.
- Do not leave children unattended around water, including swimming pools, even if they know how to swim.
- Do not swim, bathe or play in ditches, bayous, creeks or lakes due to health risks associated with water that may be contaminated with bacteria and toxins.
- Health risks that occur from exposure to these waters include diarrhea, gastrointestinal infections and various bacterial infections, including potentially deadly bacterial infections such as tetanus (lockjaw).

Generator Safety

- Read the product instructions to properly operate and other safety tips.
- Never use the generator indoors, in a garage, or carport.
- Turn the generator off before refueling.
- Keep the running generator away from doors, windows and vents.
- Clean up any fuel spills before restarting the generator.
- Install battery operated CO alarms in your home.
- Look for symptoms of CO poisoning; headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, confusion, seizures, loss of consciousness.
- Get out of the house and seek medical help immediately if you or a family member has these symptoms.

Drinking Water Safety

After a hurricane, water may not be safe. Germs and chemicals may be in the water. Listen to local officials to find out if your water is safe.

- Bottled water. Use only water from bottles that have a sealed top.
- Boiling. Boil water for two (2) minutes after it reaches a full rolling boil.

Food Safety

Throw away any food that:

- Has been in a non-running refrigerator for 4 hours or more.
- Has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- May have come in contact with flood or storm water.

- Has been at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.

Things to do:

- Thawed food that contains ice crystals or is 40° F degrees or below can be refrozen or cooked.
- Do not use contaminated water to drink, make baby formula, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, brush your teeth, wash dishes, or make ice.
- Do not feed spoiled food to your pets. They may get sick like people do.

Burning of Hurricane Debris

Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services and the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office strongly urge residents of Harris County to avoid open burning of storm and tree debris created from Hurricane Ike. This includes tree branches and wooden fences.

- Smoke from burning debris can enter homes and cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. Smoke can be much more harmful to people with lung problems such as asthma.
- Debris burning has a negative impact on air quality and is also a potential fire hazard.
- Place all debris near the street and work with your local jurisdiction or precinct personnel to dispose of the debris.

Cleanup after Sewage Backup

With no electricity, there may not be enough power for the sewer lines (lift stations) to push the sewage to the wastewater plants. This may cause sewage back-up into your home through places like toilets and bathtubs.

- Clean up sewage backup as soon as possible to prevent illnesses.
- Keep children and pets out of the area.
- Protect yourself: wear long pants and long sleeve shirts, rubber boots and gloves.
- Use cleaning supplies, such as brooms, mops, buckets, hose and disinfectants.
- Clean all items and surfaces touched by sewage.
- Throw away items that cannot be washed, such as cosmetics, books, medicines, mattresses, stuffed animals, toys, carpet and upholstered furniture.
- Throw away food that may have come in contact with sewage water.
- Seek immediate attention if you become ill.

HCPHES EPH Complaint Line (713) 920-2831

Mosquito Control

- It is mosquito season, be aware of any standing water around your property that can be drained. This will help reduce the likelihood of mosquito breeding sites and prevent illness such as West Nile Virus.
- When outdoors (especially between the hours of dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active), use an insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 (Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus). Apply as directed on the label.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good condition and seal other openings, such as those around window air conditioning units, to keep mosquitoes out of the house.

HCPHES Mosquito Control (713) 440-4800

Veterinary Public Health

- Make sure your pets get plenty of clean drinking water.
- Be careful around loose or lost pets. Frightened animals are more likely to bite if approached or handled.
- Do not touch unknown animals.
- Wildlife has also been affected. Bats and skunks are still potential rabies carriers. For injured wildlife call the Houston SPCA Hotline at 713-435-2990.
- Use caution when clearing storm debris and tree limbs as snakes and fire ants can be a problem.
- Contact your local animal control agency for assistance or to report animal bites. Visit www.countypets.com for a list of area agencies.
- HCPHES Veterinary Public Health has increased holding periods for lost pets. Photos of the animals in our shelter are uploaded twice daily on the website.

HCPHES Veterinary Public Health (281) 999-3191

Shelter Address: 612 Canino Road

Shelter Hours: Monday – Friday, 1:00pm to 5:50pm, Saturday, 11:00 am to 4:00pm

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