



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

#103-12600 Trans Canada Hwy
Ladysmith, BC
Canada V9G 1M5

T 250.924.6125
F 250.924.6126

www.fnha.ca

February 2, 2020

Communique

Flood Safety Information

Vancouver Island BC has been experiencing severe flooding and the FNHA would like to provide some information for First Nations communities to stay safe and be prepared during this time. This information is from the FNHA Environmental Public Health team.

During Flooding:

- If flood waters cover your sewage disposal field, stop using the sewage system
- If power goes out, keep the door closed on the fridge/freezer and keep food inside it. This will hold the temperature for a period of time (up to about 12h for a fridge, 24h for a half-full freezer, and up to 48h for a full freezer).
- Wash hands with soap and water if you come in contact with flood water. It's very possible that it's been contaminated
- Stay away from flood waters and fast-moving rivers

After Flooding:

- Confirm with community or emergency officials prior to returning to your home
- During emergency events, water supplies can become contaminated. The safety of your water is largely dependent on where it comes from. Please see below on surface water and well safety information
- Precautions should be taken after a flood or when food comes into contact with flood waters. It is hard to make food safe to eat once it has been exposed to flood waters that are heavily contaminated.

Water Safety

If you have your own water intake from a stream or a domestic well, there are things you can do to minimize impacts to your water system before a flood.

Surface water supplies

You can help protect your water supply and the water supplies of downstream users by moving all pesticides, chemicals (including disinfectants for water treatment) and other contaminants to an elevated location so they don't get flushed away or dissolve in flood waters.

You can protect private surface water intakes by placing sandbags around them. This may minimize damage during a flood when debris in streams may be greater than normal. Extreme caution should be used when working around creeks and rivers. Flowing water can present a drowning hazard in some situations.

Wells

If you have a domestic well, ensure that your wellhead is protected with a surface seal and a cap. A registered well-driller is required to do this work.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/groundwater-wells-aquifers/groundwater-wells/information-for-well-drillers-well-pump-installers>

Be ready to turn off the electricity to your well pump just prior to the flood. Since water supplies can be impacted by flooding, ensure that you have at least a 72 hour supply of water on hand.

You can either store bottled water which can be purchased from the store in advance or fill clean plastic milk jugs or other containers.

Water Safety Source: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/emergency/pdf/preparing-for-a-flood.pdf>

Food Safety after a Flood

If exposed to flood waters, destroy:

- Foods packaged in containers that are not waterproof
- Bottled drinks and home preserves, which may be difficult to clean & sanitize under caps, lids or sealing rings
- Canned goods that:
 - Appear to have a broken seal
 - Show signs of bloating or seepage
- Any previously-opened packaged foods

Commercially-canned foods in good condition may be salvaged by

1. Removing the label
2. Washing the can in warm soapy water and then rinsing
3. Sanitizing in a solution of 40 mL of regular household bleach in 1 litre of water (approx. 5 ounces or 10 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water)
4. Marking the contents on the food container if it will not be used right away

Discard food that:

- Is unpackaged and was exposed to flood waters, including fresh fruit and vegetables
- Was not temperature controlled (warmer than 40C for more than 2 hours), whether or not it was exposed to flood water
- Is considered higher-risk, including:
 - Cooked grains
 - Cooked vegetables
 - Dairy products
 - Eggs
 - Meat & poultry
 - Seafood

Flood Safety Information

For more information:

[FNHA - Flood Safety Information](#)

<https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/flood-safety-information>

[CMHC: Flood Cleanup](#)

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/maintaining-and-managing/managing-first-nation-properties/maintenance-solutions/mould-in-housing/mould-prevention-and-flood-cleanup>

[Septic Systems - What to Do after the Flood:](#)

<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/septic-systems-what-do-after-flood>