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Staying Safe and Healthy During and After a Flood

HAYDEN, ID – In the wake of several North Idaho communities experiencing flooding and anticipating more rain this week, Panhandle Health District (PHD) is reminding residents to stay safe and healthy during and after flood conditions.

“We’re urging people in and around flooded areas to help prevent injuries and the spread of disease,” said Dale Peck, PHD’s Environmental Health Administrator. “Flood waters can contain sewage, hazardous chemicals, and pathogens that pose a potential health risk. People should avoid them if possible and take precautions before re-entering affected areas.”

Here are four steps you can take to protect your home and your family during and after a flood:

1. **Turn around, don’t drown:** Steer clear of flooded roads. Cars or other vehicles do not provide adequate protection from flood waters. Water on roads may appear shallow, but the road could be washed away and dangerous for drivers.

2. **Avoid utilizing or recreating in flood water:** After flooding has occurred in the area, be aware that flood water may contain sewage, hazardous chemicals or lead. Do not allow pets to swim in the water and wash all contaminated clothes and items in hot water and detergent.

3. **Inspect your well and/or septic system:** Before resuming normal use of a well, have the water tested for possible bacteria and pollutants. Panhandle Health District can address well and septic system concerns, and food supply information for businesses. Environmental Health Specialists can connect you with local water testing labs or help inspect your property, if necessary.

4. **Prevent disease:** If you get a cut or a puncture wound that is exposed to flood water, there is some risk of tetanus and you should be vaccinated if you haven’t had a tetanus vaccination or “booster” in the past five years. Your primary care provider or Panhandle Health District can provide tetanus vaccinations for children and adults.

The U.S. National Weather Service has issued flood warnings in Kootenai, Bonner, Boundary, Shoshone and Benewah counties. You can find more information about preparing and protecting your home, food and water during and after a flood, [here](#).