



Contaminated Water and Related Hazards

Climate change is increasing the risk of flooding in Massachusetts. Flooding of septic systems, sewage treatment plants, farms, homes, and businesses can lead to flood water contaminated by chemicals and other dangerous pollutants. Contact with this flood water can result in gastrointestinal illness, skin and eye infections, and wound infections.

Flooding can also damage the power grid, and roads and bridges that might take days or longer to repair. Lack of heat, light, and energy for cooking, refrigeration and medical equipment may result in medical emergencies or death. Other risks include injury or death from debris, downed wires, drowning, falls, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, and motor vehicle crashes.



Who is at higher risk?

Some people may be more at risk because of where they live, their access to official government information, availability of resources to prepare and respond, and whether they already have health problems. These include:

- Children under 5 and people over 65
- People who rent their homes
- People of color due to systemic racism
- People who speak little or no English who may not receive emergency messages in their native language
- Pregnant people
- People with disabilities
- People with compromised immune systems
- People living alone or with limited mobility
- People who need electricity to use medical equipment or refrigerate medications
- Utility and rescue workers

What can we do about it?

- [Make a plan for storms](#)
- [Create an emergency kit](#)
- [Know your flood and surge zones](#)
- Avoid contact with floodwater and mud which may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage
- Stay out of damaged buildings and away from flooded areas or roads
- Test private wells for contaminants after flooding
- Repair damaged septic systems
- Do not drive into floodwater – turn around instead