

The Hagen fire brigade has summarized here the precautionary measures you should observe presently:

## **Protection measures in case of flooding in the house**

### **When you first walk into your home:**

Try to return home in the day time, so that you don't have to use lights. Use battery operated flash lights and lanterns instead of candles, gas lanterns or torches.

- If you have stagnant water in your home and if the main power can be turned off from a dry spot, turn off the power first, even if this will delay cleaning.
- If you need to step on stagnant water to gain access to the main power switch, call an electrician to turn it off. NEVER turn on or turn off the power yourself, or use an insulated electric tool or device while standing in water.
- Have an electrician check the home electrical system before turning on the power again.
- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, close the main gas valve, open all windows, and get out of the house immediately. Notify the gas company, the police or the fire brigade, do **not turn on or turn off** the light or do anything that could trigger a spark. If necessary, inform your neighbours as well. Do not return until you are told that it is safe to do so.
- If the house has been closed for several days, enter the house briefly to open the doors and windows to ventilate the house for a while (at least 30 minutes) before staying longer.
- If your home has been flooded and has been closed for several days, assume that your home has mould growth.
- If your home has been flooded, it can also be contaminated with sewage. Refer to: "Flooding after a disaster or an emergency situation".

### **Throw away unsafe food:**

Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or rainwater; perishable food that has not been properly refrigerated due to power failure, or has an unusual odour, colour, or texture. Unsafe food can make you sick, even if they look, smell and taste normal. When in doubt, throw it away. For more information, refer to "Keep food and water safe after a disaster or an emergency situation".

### **Use generators and other electrical devices safely:**

- Talk to your utility company about using electrical appliances, including power generators. Be aware that it is against the law to connect generators to electrical circuits in your home without approved automatic circuit breaker devices. If a generator is in operation after electrical power is restored, it can become a major fire hazard. In addition, improperly connecting a generator to your home's electrical circuits can put the line workers who help restore power in your area at risk. CAUTION - there is mortal danger!
- All electrical devices must be completely dry before being used again. Have a certified electrician check these points if you have any doubts. For more information, refer to "Protect yourself and others from electrical hazards after a disaster".
- Never use a generator, high-pressure washer, or a gasoline-powered engine in your home, basement, or in your garage, or less than six meters away from windows, doors, or vents. For more information, refer to "Preventing carbon monoxide poisoning after an emergency situation".

### **Dry your home to prevent mould:**

- If flood or rainwater has entered your home, dry it as soon as possible to prevent mould growth.

- Follow the below steps:
- If you have power and an electrician has confirmed that it is safe to turn it on, use a “wet and dry” vacuum cleaner (or the suction function of a carpet steam cleaner), an electrically operated water feed pump, or a sump pump to remove the stagnant water in the building. If you operate equipments in wet areas, make sure to wear rubber boots.
- If you don't have power or if it is unsafe to turn it on, you can use a portable generator. In this way, you can power the devices to remove stagnant water.
- Note: If you need to use a gasoline-powered pump, a generator, a high-pressure washer, or other gasoline-powered tools to clean your home, never operate the gasoline engine in a house, basement, garage, carport, porch, or other enclosed or partially enclosed structures, or less than six meters away from doors, windows or vents. This also applies when the windows and doors are closed. Such an improper use can result in dangerous levels of carbon monoxide and carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If weather permits, open the windows and doors of the house, to help in the drying up process.
- Use fans and dehumidifiers to remove excess moisture. Fans should be placed by a window or a door to blow the air outwards instead of inwards, in order to prevent mould from spreading.
- Before you turn it on, have your home heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC) checked and cleaned by a maintenance or service professional, who has experience in removing mould. If the HVAC system has been flooded with water, turning on the mould-contaminated HVAC system will spread mould throughout the house. Professional cleaning kills the mould and prevents subsequent mould formation. Once the service personnel confirms that your system is clean and safe, you can turn it on and use it to remove excess moisture from your home.
- Prevent water from getting back into your home. For example, rainwater should drain from gutters or from the roof of the house. The ground around the house should be sloped away from the house to keep the basement and crawl space dry.
- Make sure that the crawl spaces in basements have adequate drainage to limit water ingress. Ventilate this area to allow it to dry up.

#### **Avoid Injury:**

- Floods can contain sharp objects such as broken glass or metal that can cause injury and lead to infection. Immediate first aid can help heal small wounds and prevent infection.
- If you have a stab wound or a wound that is contaminated with faeces, soil or saliva, have a doctor treat the wound and see if a tetanus booster shot is needed.

#### **Prevent infection from open wounds and rashes:**

Open wounds and rashes exposed to flood water can become infected.

To protect yourself and your family:

- Avoid flood waters, when you have an open wound.
- Cover clean, open wounds with a waterproof bandage to reduce the risk of infection.
- Keep open wounds as clean as possible by washing them thoroughly with soap and plain water.
- See a doctor right away, if your wound develops redness, swelling, or oozing.

See a doctor as soon as possible if:

- There is a foreign body in the wound.
- The wound is at a specific risk of infection (for example, dog bite or sting from a sordid object).
- An old wound shows signs of infection (increased pain and aching, swelling, redness, discharge, or fever).

**Protect yourself and your loved ones from diarrhoeal diseases:**

Be aware that flood water can contain sewage and that eating or drinking anything contaminated by flood water can cause diarrhoeal diseases (such as E. Coli or salmonella infections).

To protect yourself and your family:

- Wash your hands after coming into contact with flood water.
- Also, be sure to wash children's hands with soap and water often and always before meals.
- Do not let children play in flooded areas.
- Do not let children play with toys that have been contaminated by flood water and not disinfected.
- Do not bathe in water that may be contaminated with sewage or toxic chemicals. These include rivers, streams or lakes that are contaminated by flood water.

**Watch out for possible chemicals in the flood water:**

Floods can cause containers with chemicals to be dislodged from their normal storage locations.

- Do not attempt to move propane tanks that you may find - they are dangerous and could cause fire or an explosion. If you find any such container, contact the fire brigade or police immediately.
- Be extremely careful when removing car batteries. Car batteries can still have an electrical charge also in floods. Use insulated gloves and avoid contact with any acid that may have possibly leaked from the damaged car battery.

**Avoid electrical hazards inside or outside your home.**

After a natural disaster, you need to be careful to avoid electrical hazards both in your home and also elsewhere.

- Turn off electricity and natural gas supplies or propane tanks in your home in order to avoid fire, electric shock or explosions.
- NEVER touch a dangling power line. Call the power supply company to report loose power lines. Avoid contact with overhead power lines during cleaning and other activities.
- Do not drive through stagnant water with overturned power lines in the water.
- If you think someone has been electrocuted, call the emergency number 112 or let someone else call.