

### Media statement

27 November 2019

#### Staying safe and healthy during storms, floods or loss of power

As we head in to the summer storm season, the Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit has provided advice on staying healthy in the event of storms, floods or loss of power.

Environmental Health Services Manager Peter Dyer said: "There are many considerations, some requiring attention well after the storm has passed, such as managing mould".

#### General considerations

- Young children, the elderly, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases – such as diabetes and kidney disease are more prone to infections and should consider avoiding flood water and mud
- Wash your hands with soap and water or a hand sanitiser after contact with damaged materials, flood water or mud, going to the toilet and before preparing or consuming food
- Only use generators in well ventilated areas preferably outside – otherwise there will be a build-up of toxic exhaust fumes
- Wear protective clothing such as long sleeves, long pants, hats, gloves and rubber boots
- Watch out for snakes, spiders and mosquitoes
- Treat and cover any wounds. Seek medical advice about tetanus vaccination if you haven't had a tetanus course in the last 5 years

#### Food safety

- Throw away:
  - Refrigerated food that has been left unrefrigerated (or above 5°C) for more than 4 hours
  - Frozen food if the power to the freezer has been off for more than 48 hours for a full freezer and more than 24 hours for a half full freezer
  - Food that has an unusual odour, colour or texture
- Food that has started to defrost should be eaten as soon as possible. It should not be re-frozen

#### Recreational water use

Heavy rainfall events can wash contaminants present in the catchments into waterways and can overwhelm the capacity of sewage treatment infrastructure causing sewage to discharge directly into waterways.

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Exposure to affected waterways, such as beaches, rivers, creeks, ponds, and lakes, can therefore present an elevated health risk in the days following a flood event. Using waterways for recreational activities after heavy rainfall can lead to gastrointestinal illness through accidental consumption of water and ear, eye and skin infections.

Be guided by any signs around waterways indicating risks and contact the local Council for information relating to specific sites.

#### **Managing waste**

Contact your local Council about any changes to normal waste collection, and for specific disposal advice.

#### **Pools, spas and water tanks**

After a flood disaster you may need to restore your pool, spa or water tank to make it safe to use again. It is likely that pools, spas and water tanks after being contaminated with floodwater will contain harmful germs and may become breeding sites for mosquitoes.

Visit the Queensland Government website to assist you with things to consider such as electrical safety, restoring water quality and mosquito control.

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/recovery-after-disaster/cleaning-up/after-a-storm.-flood-or-cyclone/pools-water-tanks>

#### **Mould**

After heavy rains, the heat, humidity and water can all cause mould to grow. For information how you can reduce the risk of mould related health problems visit the Queensland Government website:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/returning-to-buildings/>

#### **ENDS**

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