

Media statement

31 March 2017

Public Health advice on staying safe and healthy when there are storms, floods or loss of power

Mr Peter Dyer, Manager of Environmental Health Services at the Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit has recommended the following advice on staying healthy in the event of storms, floods or loss of power:

- Only use a generator in a well ventilated area – otherwise there will be a build-up of toxic exhaust fumes
- Avoid contact with floodwater
- Wear protective clothing such as long sleeves, long pants, gloves and rubber boots
- Treat and cover any wounds. Seek medical advice about tetanus vaccination if you haven't had a tetanus course in the last 5 years
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water of drinking quality

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 started to defrost should be eaten as soon as possible. It should not be re-frozen.
 - Food that has an unusual odour, colour or texture

Recreational water use

- Heavy rainfall events can wash microbial and chemical 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 at risk waterways for recreational activities after heavy rainfall can lead to gastrointestinal illness through accidental consumption of water and ear, eye and skin infections
- The public should be guided by any signs around waterways indicating local risks and to contact their 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

Mould

After heavy rains, the heat, humidity and water can all cause mould to grow. For more information on the above topics and how you can reduce the risk of mould related health problems by removing mould safely and taking action to stop or minimise mould growth by accessing the Queensland Health website:

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

ENDS

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