



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Wallace Welch & Willingham



## HEALTH CONCERNS FOLLOWING A HURRICANE OR FLOOD

A natural disaster can be one of the most devastating events in a person's lifetime. Families can be uprooted and entire neighborhoods can be destroyed in the blink of an eye. If you ever have to endure such a crisis, it is important to know what resources can help you in the wake of a disaster.

While many people are concerned with preparing for a crisis, the aftermath can be overlooked. Coping with the effects of a disaster are as important as preparing for the crisis itself.

### Unhealthy Conditions

After a hurricane or large flood, there are huge amounts of water in places where there usually is not. This can cause a variety of health concerns for people living in or around the affected areas.

Floodwaters often contain sewage, chemicals and submerged objects like glass or sharp metal. In addition, the water can contain disease. For these reasons, you should avoid wading in the contaminated water or consuming food that was submerged, even if it is in sealed containers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges parents to thoroughly wash and disinfect any toys that were exposed to floodwaters before letting children play with them. The CDC warns that not doing so can result in diarrhea or other stomach issues.

Anyone living in an affected area should also take precautions against mosquitoes, which breed

rapidly in standing water. An influx in mosquitoes means a higher chance of contracting the West Nile or Zika viruses, both of which are carried by the insects. The CDC recommends using bug spray with DEET to stay protected.

### Proper Cleanup

Improper cleanup after a disaster can lead to more health issues, according to the CDC. Mold grows quickly in warm, damp environments and can cause respiratory infections or worsen allergies.

When cleaning, the CDC recommends wearing rubber gloves and boots to minimize direct contact with the contaminated areas. Hard surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with bleach. Fabrics should be washed in warm water, and upholstered furniture should be dried in the sun and sprayed with disinfectant. Simply drying things will not be sufficient; everything must be disinfected.

### Help Coping

Beyond physical stress, mental and emotional stress runs high during and after a disaster. It is important you have the resources to cope with the devastating experience so you can move on. This means talking with loved ones, seeking professional help or taking advantage of your company's employee assistance

advantage of your company's employee assistance program, which can put you in touch with coping services.

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to speak with mental health professionals. The hotline was established by the Health and Human Services Department and is available anytime.

Visit the [CDC website](#) for more information on coping with a disaster and resources for recovery.