

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **USE CAUTION TO SAFELY CLEAN UP DEBRIS**

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**Fort Myers, FL**— Residents and others working to clean up debris left by recent storms could be at risk of sustaining injuries, and the Florida Department of Health in Lee County is urging residents to practice caution when cleaning in and around their homes.

**Every person involved in clean up should make sure they have an up to date tetanus vaccination.** There may also be unseen hazards under the water in areas that experienced flooding. Flood waters can mask debris, downed power lines and other hazards.

The department recommends the following tips to help clean up after recent storms:

- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during clean-up of sewage and to avoid injury and contamination.
- Be careful about mixing household cleaners and disinfectants. Combining certain types of products can produce toxic fumes and result in injury or death.
- Walls, hard-surfaced floors and many other household surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of 1 cup of bleach per 5 gallons of water.
- Remove and discard contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected such as wall-coverings, cloth and rugs. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean.
- Drywall and insulation that have been soaked should be removed and discarded so disinfection and drying of the internal wall structure can take place.
- Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, may possibly be air dried in the sun and sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant. However, these items may need to be discarded.
- It can be difficult to throw away items in a home, particularly those with sentimental value. However, keeping certain items soaked by sewage or floodwaters may be unhealthy. In general, materials that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours should be discarded
- Fiberboard, fibrous insulation and disposable filters in your heating and air conditioning system should be replaced.
- Chainsaws should only be operated in safe conditions and by people that are experienced in proper use.

## WOUND CARE / TETANUS

- If you sustain a wound or deep cut that concerns you as handle debris, seek medical attention. Make sure to ask your doctor if you need a tetanus booster vaccine.
- Due to possible contamination, do not expose wounds to floodwaters.
- Proper wound care is essential for all cuts and lacerations regardless of exposure to floodwaters. Clean wounds with soap and disinfected or bottled water.
- Individuals deployed to work on recovery efforts are encouraged to contact their primary health care provider to make sure they are current on their tetanus vaccine.

For more information about debris clean up safety, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html>

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