

Flood safety and clean up

Fact sheet | October 2022

Health risks from flood water

The heavy rain, floods and storms over the past days may carry pollution into waterways.

Floodwater is often contaminated by sewage from overflowing sewerage or septic systems, and by agricultural or industrial wastes and chemicals.

If possible, avoid contact with floodwaters to avoid contact with polluted water or soil.

If it's unavoidable, follow these tips to avoid infection:

- Don't wade through water, even shallow water. If you must enter shallow water, wear solid boots or shoes for protection.
- Try to avoid contact with mud and dirt; and wear gloves when handling items contaminated with floodwater.
- Cover cuts and scratches with waterproof bandages

Always wash your hands with soap and running water after contact with floodwater and after handling pets or other items that may have been in contact with water or soil. Always wash your hands thoroughly after participating in clean-up activities

In certain conditions, our waterways and beaches can be home to disease-causing bacteria or other contaminants that may pose health risks to swimmers.

In areas of flooding, water is likely to be unsuitable for swimming for a longer period of time. Similarly, it may not be safe to use flood water for irrigation, watering your garden, or animals.

Flood affected septic systems

If your property has a septic system and has been affected by floodwater, a licensed plumber or service technician should assess your septic system for safety and function.

If you use a damaged system, there's a risk that sewage could back up into your house or garden. This could cause a human health and pollution risk.

There may be damage to:

- Shallow PVC pipes, which may be blocked
- Plastic tanks and sumps (concrete tanks are less likely to be damaged, but should still be inspected)
- Disposal/irrigation system and pipework
- Pumps and other equipment with electrical components.

If you need to replace your system or find out about regulations and approval process, visit epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/water/about-wastewater/onsite-wastewater-regulatory-framework

Managing waste after a flood

Floods can cause harmful materials to shift or react. Be cautious when assessing and working with flood-impacted property.

epa.vic.gov.au

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GPO Box 4395, Melbourne VIC 3001
1300 372 842



Asbestos can be found in some fibre cement sheeting and pipes, vinyl floor tiles, electrical parts and vehicle brake pads. It is not always possible to tell whether a material contains asbestos by looking at it.

If in any doubt:

- Do not disturb the material
- Take steps to prevent others from disturbing the material.

EPA is supporting local government and clean up operators in ensuring the right waste goes to the right places. For more information, visit localgovernment.vic.gov.au

Waste levy and gate fee waiver

There will be no waste levy or gate fees at landfills accepting flood-affected waste from 46 flood-affected local government areas. This will apply until 31 December 2022.

- Flood-affected waste means any material:
- Deposited on a property by the floods, or
- Damaged by the floods
- Needing to be disposed at a landfill

The list of 46 flood-affected local government areas (LGAs) is available at: premier.vic.gov.au/fees-waived-flood-waste

Fees

If you are taking your own waste to a landfill, you will need evidence to show your address is in one of the affected LGAs. You can bring your driver's licence or a recent rates notice.



Further information and updates

If you are in immediate danger and require urgent assistance, dial 000.

If you are not in immediate danger, but you require immediate relief assistance, call Emergency Recovery Victoria's hotline on 1800 560 760.

For current emergency advice, see emergency.vic.gov.au.

For more information, contact EPA on 1300 372 842 or visit epa.vic.gov.au



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