

Clean-up following a cyclone or flooding

There will be hazards that you may come across in and around your property and the local community following a cyclone or flooding.

The immediate risks to be aware of include:

- damaged downed power lines / electrical wires
- damaged gas supplies and fuel leaks
- unstable structures.

Hazards to be aware of when returning to and cleaning-up your property over the coming days or weeks include:

- damaged asbestos cement material
- decomposing food in your fridge following extended power outages
- damaged on-site wastewater systems such as septic tanks or leach drains causing sewage problems
- contaminated swimming pools or rainwater tanks with debris and bacteria
- displaced or damaged chemicals, poisons or pesticides
- increase in activity of snakes, rodents, spiders and flies
- dead animals, particularly on farms, that need be appropriately buried
- increase in mosquito activity due to excessive rainfall providing perfect conditions for mosquito breeding
- potential mould and dampness problems in homes impacted by rainfall
- contaminated recreational waterways such as beaches or rivers from sewage, chemicals and excessive nutrient and other pollutants making it unsafe for swimming, fishing or eating shellfish.

Cleaning-up your property

It is extremely important that you take care when cleaning-up any damage on your property.

Key reminders when cleaning-up:

- Be careful with any electrical, fuel or gas equipment or lines. Do not switch on electrical or gas equipment until it has been checked by a licensed electrician or gas fitter.
- Do not light matches or lighters in case of gas and fuel leaks.
- Only use a generator in a well-ventilated area. Make sure you follow the manufacturers' guidelines and advice of emergency services personnel in the area.
- Avoid contact with any floodwater or stagnant water (they may be contaminated and/or fast flowing and deep).
- Use protective clothing and sturdy shoes including:
 - rubber boots or steel cap boots
 - gloves
 - goggles
 - facemask if you are scrubbing, hosing or pressure-washing.
- If there is asbestos on the property it is critical you follow specific asbestos clean-up procedures which includes wearing a P2 or N95 face mask and disposable coveralls, and **not** using a pressure cleaner or power tools.
- Store rotting and perishable waste in sealed bags for collection.
- Do not leave hazardous waste on the kerbside (e.g. chemicals, medicine, gas tanks, asbestos).

- Keep children and pets away from the building until it has been cleaned and made safe.
- Remember to wash your hands thoroughly after each clean-up session and always before eating or making food.
- Take your time. Do not overdo it when cleaning up. You will be under enough stress and strain – your health is critical. Take frequent breaks. Stay warm when it is cold and be careful not to overheat when it is hot.
- Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids.
- As you clean up, take photographs or make a list as you go for your insurance claim.

Utilities and services

Electricity networks may be damaged and may not be energised, leaving you without power.

The top priority will be to make hazards safe, then restoration work will commence as quickly as possible. You may also need to have repairs done to the power lines and poles on your property.

Be safe – if you see a downed powerline or damaged electrical assets stay at least 8 metres clear and call 13 13 51 to report the hazard to Western Power.

Remember:

- Mains water and sewerage services may not be functioning due to damaged pipes and/or lack of power to pump water
- Mains gas supplies may be damaged or turned off
- Mobile phone towers may be damaged or not supplied with power to operate (these towers only have limited back up battery power).

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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- You may not have access to internet services
- Local Government Services may be affected.

Rodents and flies

To discourage rodents and flies and the spread of disease:

- Remove food sources and items that can provide shelter for rodents or promote fly breeding
- Wash dishes and cooking utensils immediately after use
- Dispose of garbage and debris as soon as practically possible
- Lay rodent baits or traps

Further information

Refer to the HealthyWA website:

healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Hazards-after-cyclones-and-floods

Other factsheets include:

- Asbestos cement material following a cyclone or flooding
- Chemicals, poisons and pesticides following a cyclone or flooding
- On-site wastewater systems after a cyclone or flooding

To discuss further:

- Contact your local government Environmental Health Officer
- Call the Environmental Health Directorate, Department of Health WA on (08) 9222 2000 or email ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au