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Flood water continues to pose serious risks, potential drowning, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services warns

Parents should keep children out of harm's way; precautions should be taken by all who work near flood water to avoid exposure

JEFFERSON CITY – With many rivers and creeks still pushing above flood stage and additional communities about to be impacted by flooding, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services reminds Missourians of the serious health and safety risks posed by flood water.

“We know from experience that the major danger of flooding occurs after the storm passes and people drive or wade into moving or standing water,” DHSS Director Dr. Randall Williams said. “It is vital that people realize how risky these waters still are.”

Parents should warn children never to play in or near flood water. Soaked creek and stream banks may be unstable and suddenly give away, tossing you into moving water.

Storm drains or culverts obscured by flood water can create powerful currents that can sweep people in with deadly consequences for them along with people attempting to rescue them.

There are many risks in addition to drowning:

- Flood water can contain raw sewage and pose other risks, including infectious diseases, hazardous chemical exposure, and debris that can cause injuries.
- Direct contact with flood water can cause skin rashes, infect cuts or wounds, or cause stomach illnesses including vomiting and diarrhea.
- Downed or broken power lines in flood water pose an electrocution hazard.
- Sharp objects and debris, such as glass or metal objects, may be lurking in flood water.
- Animals, insects, snakes and other reptiles that have been displaced due to flooding may be submerged or hiding in debris in or near flood waters.

If you have been exposed to flood waters it can make you sick. Be sure to remove clothing exposed to flood water as quickly as possible. Wash your hands and any skin exposed to flood waters with clean soap and water.

Monitor any cuts, scrapes or wounds for redness, swelling or drainage. Seek medical attention if any of these symptoms develop.

These same risks apply to people who work in clean up and recovery and are exposed to flood water.

Anyone assisting with flood cleanup should have had a booster dose of tetanus-diphtheria (Td) vaccine within the past 10 years. Contact your local health department or your primary care physician if you need a TD vaccine.

For more information regarding flood safety and recovery, go to <http://health.mo.gov/living/environment/floodrecovery/index.php>.

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