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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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EASTERN IDAHO PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT URGES EASTERN IDAHOANS TO PREPARE FOR FLOODING

Runoff from high levels of snowfall has just begun and as rainfall continues, the threat of flooding exists. In fact, some counties in Eastern Idaho have already issued disaster declarations because of flooding. Precautions should be taken in order to stay safe in the event of flooding. Rural areas are of particular concern because of private sewage systems and domestic wells.

Eastern Idaho Public Health District (EIPHD) is offering homeowners guidance to respond appropriately to health hazards that may arise during emergency flooding, after the flood, and general preparation to take before flooding occurs.

Kellye Eager, Director of Environmental Health Services for EIPHD, explained that environmental health issues arise when flooding occurs. "In our rural counties, we are particularly concerned with septic systems and domestic wells. Water supplies can become contaminated with bacteria and can cause gastrointestinal illness; private septic systems may not function properly; and mold can also be a hazard," stated Eager.

PREPARING FOR FLOODING

- Make sure all septic tanks are full of liquid. The high-water season is not the time to have tanks pumped; empty tanks are buoyant and may "pop" out of the ground during flooding.
- If a septic system becomes inundated with flood water, discontinue its use. When necessary, shut off power to a sewage lift pump or pump chamber if one is present.
- If necessary, plug floor drains to prevent sewage from backing up into the basement, but be aware that floodwaters may still enter the basement through cracks and seams.
- Homeowners with drinking water wells should minimize potential impacts to their drinking water supply by ensuring the ground around the well casing is sloped away from the well; check that the ground around the casing has not settled or have any areas where water could pond or flow down into the aquifer; and ensuring that the well casing has a tight fitting water proof cap.
- Power should be shut off to any well impacted by flood water

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- If you notice any changes in your well water such as an “off taste,” cloudiness, discoloration, odor, or a change in temperature, **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER** until it has been tested and are sure it is safe. Drink bottled water or disinfect the well water by mixing 1/8 teaspoon of chlorine bleach (non scented) to a gallon of water and let stand for 30 minutes before using or bring the water to a rolling boil for 1 minute. Store disinfected water in clean containers with tight fitting lids.
- Make sure you are up-to-date on your tetanus vaccination, especially first responders who will be involved in flood response or recovery. Flood water often contains infectious organisms including bacteria such as tetanus. Tetanus can be acquired from contaminated soil or water entering broken areas of the skin, such as cuts, abrasions, or puncture wounds. Tetanus is an infectious disease that affects the nervous system and causes severe muscle spasms, known as lockjaw. Therefore it is important for everyone to be up to date on their Td/Tdap (tetanus booster). Call your local health district or private provider to get vaccinated if your tetanus booster is not up to date.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For specific questions about flood preparation or recovery, you may your local EIPHD office and speak to an Environmental Health Specialist.

Bonneville County	523-5382
Jefferson County	745-7297
Madison County	356-3239
Fremont County	624-7585
Teton County	354-2220

You may also visit the following websites for more detailed information about flood preparedness and recovery:

Eastern Idaho Public Health District:	www.phd7.idaho.gov
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC):	www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):	www.epa.gov/naturalevents/flooding.html
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):	www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/index.shtm

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