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Flood Preparedness

For the Press and Public



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Flood Preparedness and Support

Dear Kendall County Residents,

Hurricane Harvey devastated communities across southeast Texas and Louisiana this past week and it appears another is headed towards the United States this week.



**American
Red Cross**

If you would like to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey please see the link for the [Red Cross website](#) that is helping with relief efforts. You can donate money online or text "HARVEY" to 90999 to donate \$10.

With flooding cleanup and recovery efforts well underway down south, the Kendall County Health Department has created this packet to assist in preparing for the propensity of fall floods in our area. Flooding can occur with or without warning, please be aware and always be prepared.

Flood/Flash Flood Watch = "Be Aware." Conditions are right for flooding to occur in your area.

Steps to Take:

- Turn on your TV/radio. You will receive the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Know where to go. You may need to reach higher ground quickly and on foot.
- Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit. Include a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies.

Prepare Your Home:

- Bring in outdoor furniture and move important indoor items to the highest possible floor. This will help protect them from flood damage.
- Disconnect electrical appliances and do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water. You could be electrocuted.
- If instructed, turn off your gas and electricity at the main switch or valve. This helps prevent fires and explosions.

Flood Warning = "Take Action!" Flooding is either happening or will happen shortly.

Steps to Take:

- Move immediately to higher ground or stay on high ground.
- Evacuate if directed.
- Avoid walking or driving through flood waters. Turn Around, Don't Drown! Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.



Flood-Fact Sheet

Flooding can occur without warning and is especially dangerous for several reasons. It can wash away vehicles and mobile homes and cause extensive property damage. Seniors and individuals who need special assistance or cannot swim face a heightened risk of drowning. Finally, downed power lines can fall into pools of water and cause electrocution.

Before a flood:

Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.

- Elevate your furnace, water heater, and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install check valves in sewer traps to prevent floodwater from backing up into your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, sandbags, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.

Keep an adequate supply of food, drinking water, and flashlights in case you are trapped inside your home.

During a flood:

- Seek higher ground. **Do not wait for instructions.**
- Be aware of flash flood areas such as canals, streams, drainage channels, and underpasses.
- Be ready to evacuate.
- If time allows, move essential items to upper floors.
- If instructed, turn off main valves and switches. Avoid electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- If you must leave your home, **do not** walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet.

Turn Around, Don't Drown! ®

NEVER drive over a flooded road. If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately.

After a flood:

- Avoid floodwaters. Do not let children play in the water.
- Be aware of areas where water has receded. Roadways may have weakened and could collapse.
- Avoid downed power lines and muddy water where power lines may have fallen.
- Return home only when authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Discard food that may have been contaminated.
- Check on sewage systems- if damaged, these can be a serious hazard.

Health Department Issues Warning for Driving Safety during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department wants to remind residents that more people lose their LIVES in floods than in any other weather-related event. 80% of flood deaths occur in vehicles, and most happen when drivers make a single, fatal mistake - trying to navigate through flood waters. The following are important reminders for drivers during a flood:

- DO NOT DRIVE THROUGH FLOODED AREAS! Even if it looks shallow enough to cross. The large majority of deaths due to flash flooding occur with people driving through flooded areas. Roads concealed by water may not be intact.
- When water is running across a road, drivers should always turn around and choose a different route.
- If you're in a vehicle during a flash flood or water is rising around it, all occupants should get out immediately and go to higher ground. Just six inches of water can cause tires to lose traction and slide; 12 inches will float many vehicles.
- If the vehicle stalls, leave it immediately and seek higher ground. Rapidly rising water may engulf the vehicle and its occupants and sweep them away.
- If water is higher than the bottom of the door, don't open the door because it will let in water. Power windows don't stop working immediately, so you should be able to roll your window down and get out that way.
- Do not touch, brush against or try to remove a live wire on our vehicle while exiting.
- Once outside the vehicle, go to higher ground. If there is no ground or structure nearby that is higher than the roof of your vehicle, consider climbing on to your vehicle's roof, especially to avoid being swept away by fast-moving water.
- Try to keep your cell phone dry and operational, so you can call 911 after escaping to higher ground.

Health Department Issues Warning for Drowning Dangers during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department urges residents to stay away from flood waters. Do not allow children to play in or near flood water. Flood water poses drowning risks for everyone, regardless of their ability to swim. Swiftly moving shallow water can be deadly, and even shallow standing water can be dangerous for small children. Especially stay away from drains and manholes, the suction that develops may pose additional drowning risks.

Water has incredible power; a mere six inches of fast-moving flood water can knock over an adult. It takes only two feet of rushing water to carry away most vehicles. This includes pickups and SUVs.

Vehicles do not provide adequate protection from flood waters. They can be swept away or may stall in moving water. If your vehicle stalls, immediately evacuate. Once outside the vehicle, go to higher ground. If there is no ground or structure nearby that is higher than the roof of your vehicle, consider climbing on to your vehicle's roof, especially to avoid being swept away by fast-moving water. If you come to an area that is covered with water, you will not know the depth of the water or the condition of the ground under the water. This is especially true at night, when your vision is more limited.

Health Department Issues Warning for Electrical and Gas Safety during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department wants to remind residents about the dangers of electrical and gas supplies during a flood. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks should be shut off to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions. Try to return to your home during the daytime so that you do not have to use any lights. If a daytime return is not possible, use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns only. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately. Notify the gas company or the police or fire departments immediately. Do not turn on the lights or do anything that could cause a spark. Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe to do so by the authorities.

During a flood, your electrical system may also be damaged. If you see frayed wiring or sparks, or if there is an odor of something burning but no visible fire, you should immediately shut off the electrical system at the circuit breaker. You should consult your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators. All electrical equipment and appliances must be completely dry before returning them to service. It is advisable to have a certified electrician check these items if there is any question. Also, remember not to operate any gas-powered equipment indoors to due to potential carbon monoxide poisoning.

Health Department Issues Warning for Mold during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department is issuing a warning to residents about potential health effects from mold after flood waters recede.

Mold will grow in damp or humid environments. Potential health effects can occur, such as an allergic respiratory reaction, from exposure to airborne mold spores. The very young, the very old, those with compromised immune systems, and those with allergies and other significant pre-existing health problems are at greatest risk. Typical symptoms that mold-exposed persons report (alone or in combination) include:

- Respiratory problems, such as wheezing, difficulty breathing and shortness of breath
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Eye irritation (burning, watery, or reddened eyes)
- Dry, hacking cough
- Nose or throat irritation
- Skin rashes or irritation

The Health Department recommends eliminating standing water and keeping humidity levels below 60%. This will prevent mold from growing. Open windows, use fans and dehumidifiers to lower the humidity levels after pumping out standing water. Mold cleanup can be done by residents who protect themselves by using appropriate facemask and rubber gloves.

Impermeable surfaces, such as concrete floors, can then be cleaned using soap and water. Be sure to dampen surfaces before cleaning to avoid putting mold spores into the air. Any porous materials which have soaked in water for over 48 hours will need to be disposed of. It is recommended that outside help be sought from an experienced contractor for larger mold contamination.

Health Department Issues Warning for Pet Shelter during Flood

Kendall County Health Department wants to remind residents if you must evacuate your home, the best option is to try to relocate with family or friends who can accommodate you and your pet.

The next best option would be to relocate you and your pet to a “pet friendly” hotel in the area.

Health Department Issues Warning for Tetanus during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department would like the residents to be aware of the potential danger of tetanus during and after a flood. Exposure to flood waters alone does not increase the risk of tetanus. The need for tetanus vaccination after exposure to flood water depends on the presence of a wound, the condition of the wound and the likelihood the injured person is susceptible to tetanus. The reasons for getting a tetanus shot during a flood are the same reasons for getting a vaccine at any other time.

People who suffer a wound and are exposed to flood waters should get a tetanus shot if it has been more than five years since their last tetanus booster shot. People who have not had a preliminary series of tetanus vaccines (a minimum of three doses) need to be vaccinated and given tetanus immune globulin as soon as possible. Adults need a tetanus booster shot every 10 years. Talk with your health care professional or the Kendall County Health Department about the need for a tetanus shot.

Health Department Issues Warming Centers availability during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department would like to remind the residents that warming centers are available for those that have been displaced by the flood. Warming centers are available across Kendall County to ensure accessibility for all. For a complete list of warming centers please visit the Kendall County Health Department’s website at www.kendallhealth.org or by calling the Health Department at (630) 553-9100. To ensure availability, please call the shelter first to make sure they are available to receive you.

Health Department Issues Warning for Water Boil during Flood

The Kendall County Health Department would like to remind residents that if you don’t have safe bottled water, you should boil water to make it safe. Boiling is the surest method to make water safer to drink by killing disease-causing organisms, including viruses, bacteria, and parasites.

If the water is cloudy,

- Filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter OR allow it to settle.
- Draw off the clear water.
- Bring the clear water to a rolling boil for one minute (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for three minutes).
- Let the boiled water cool.

- Store the boiled water in clean sanitized containers with tight covers.

If the water is clear,

- Bring the clear water to a rolling boil for one minute (at elevations above 6,500 feet, boil for three minutes).
- Let the boiled water cool.
- Store the boiled water in clean sanitized containers with tight covers.

Health Department Issues Warning about Well and Septic Contamination Related to Flooding

The Kendall County Health Department offers helpful information to residents about safe well water. As flood waters spread across Kendall County, individual home water wells may have been contaminated. Contamination is primarily due to floodwaters infiltrating the water well and the water system in the home.

Multiple factors influence the amount of potential impact that flood water would have on an individual well system. Some factors may include:

- the age of the well
- depth of the well
- overall condition of the well
- most importantly, the height of the flood water near the well head.

If you suspect the water rose above the top of the well casing, there is a strong possibility that flood water may have entered the system through the vents on the well head, leading to possible contamination throughout the system.

If you suspect well contamination, remediation steps include flushing and disinfecting the system immediately. Once flushed and disinfected, follow up with a water test to verify that the water is contamination free. Licensed water well contractors can provide these services to help get your water system back on line. For those who do not choose to hire a contractor, you can self disinfect the well system and contact a local private lab to analyze samples taken from your well.

Health Department Offers Warning of Event-Driven Vulnerabilities of Emotional Health

Disasters can bring about significant stress. This is especially true if you have experienced a previous disaster. The good news is that many people have experience coping with stressful life events and are naturally resilient—meaning we are designed to “bounce back” from difficult times. In the days following a disaster, it is common for you, your family and friends to experience a variety of reactions. Feelings of exhaustion, worry, and anger can surface, especially if you’ve had to leave your home or have had to contend with the frustrations of having no electricity, have had to clean up disaster debris, or have had to wait in long lines for disaster assistance... Here is some information on how to recognize your current feelings and tips for taking care of the emotional health of you, your family and friends.

What you may be feeling now

When we experience a disaster or other stressful life event, we can have a variety of reactions, all of which may be common responses to difficult situations. These reactions can include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics
- Becoming easily frustrated, on a frequent basis
- Frustration occurring more quickly and more often
- Arguing more with family and friends
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely, or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns

Most of these reactions are temporary and will go away over time. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have. Look for ways to take one step at a time and focus on taking care of your disaster related needs and those of your family.

Taking Action

Getting ourselves and our lives back in a routine that is comfortable for us takes time. Each positive action you take can help you feel better and more in control. Here are some helpful tips that may help put your priorities in place and help you take care of yourself and your loved ones:

- **Take care of your safety.** Find a safe place to stay and make sure your physical health needs and those of your family are addressed. Seek medical attention, if necessary.
- **Eat healthy.** During times of stress it is important that you maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of water.
- **Get some rest.** With so much to do, it may be difficult to have enough time to rest or get adequate sleep. Giving your body and mind a break can boost your ability to cope with the stress you may be experiencing.
- **Stay connected with family and friends.** Giving and getting support is one of the most important things you can do.
- **Be patient with yourself and with those around you.** Recognize that everyone is stressed and may need some time to put their feelings and thoughts in order.
- **Set priorities.** Tackle tasks in small steps.
- **Gather information** about assistance and resources that will help you and your family members meet your disaster-related needs.
- Finally, **stay positive.** Remind yourself of how you've successfully gotten through difficult times in the past. Reach out when you need support, and help others when they need it.

If You Still Don't Feel Better

Many people have experience coping with stressful life events and typically feel better after a few days. Others find that their stress does not go away as quickly as they would like and it influences their relationships with their family, friend and others. If symptoms persist for two weeks or more, you may need additional support services.

*Please seek **IMMEDIATE** help if you or a loved one is feeling that life isn't worth living or if you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others.*

Health Department Offers Tips on Flood Recovery

Following the recent heavy rains, Kendall County Health Department cautions residents of the dangers of floodwater contaminated with bacteria, viruses and other organisms.

Common waterborne illness symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Seek immediate medical attention if symptoms persist. Parents should also restrict children from swimming or playing in flood waters. To prevent the spread of disease, always wash your hands thoroughly with plenty of warm water and soap before handling, preparing or eating food.

Cleaning up after a flood can be overwhelming. Be sure to disinfect any food preparation surfaces that may have been contaminated by floodwater. Any food or beverage containers should be carefully examined. Flooded indoor areas (walls, floors, etc.) must be scrubbed with warm, soapy water. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry clean. If there is sewage backup in the basement, it can be disposed of by pumping it into the toilet or floor drains if the drains are connected to the septic system. Do not pump sewage-contaminated water into the yard or into the street.

Persons who come in contact with floodwater should make sure their tetanus shots are up to date. If you experience a puncture wound or deep cut in floodwater clean-up, your tetanus shot should have been within the last 10 years.