

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT HEALTH DISTRICT

SERVING THE TOWNS OF BERLIN, ROCKY HILL AND WETHERSFIELD

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505 Silas Deane Highway
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Sanitary Sewer Back-up-General Information

The longer that the sewage is allowed to remain in your home or on your property, the greater the potential for illness and irreparable damage to your home, its contents, and environs. Where they may be operated safely, use of pumps and dehumidifiers will be helpful in restoring dry conditions. In any flood cleanup project regardless of the source, one should assume that pathogens are present and take appropriate precautions. Thorough cleaning of indoor sewage spills is necessary to protect people -- especially small children -- from harmful bacteria and viruses.

The survival of pathogens depends on a number of factors: location (indoors vs. outdoors), season, type of surface contaminated, whether disinfectants are used, and also on environmental conditions such as humidity, temperature, and sunlight. Sunlight (UV radiation) reduces the survival rate of pathogens with numbers decreasing rapidly with increasing exposure to UV radiation. Mild temperatures and higher humidity in external situations result in longer survival times.

Prior to undertaking cleanup efforts, take proper precautions:

- Always wear protective gloves, eyewear, and boots. Rain gear is also advisable.
- Avoid direct contact with sewage material, and be particularly careful of your face and eyes. Goggles are recommended when using a hose and/or any chemicals.
- Protect all cuts and scrapes. Immediately wash and disinfect any wound that comes in contact with sewage.

October 17, 2005

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Clean-up Following Sanitary Sewer Back-up

The following steps should be taken to mitigate the microbial risk from a building contaminated with sewage:

- Keep children and pets out of the area until clean-up has been completed.
- Remove excess water using pumps, wet vacs, or mopping.
- Increase air circulation to reduce odors and mold growth -- open all windows and doors. The use of fans, dehumidifiers and heaters may speed this process.
- Collect and dispose of all solid waste. Discard all contaminated upholstered furniture and mattresses. Other contaminated furniture should be removed and cleaned or discarded. Saturated wall-to-wall carpeting (and the pad) usually cannot be adequately cleaned. They should be removed, wrapped in plastic, and taken to a transfer station or sanitary landfill. If you decide to keep the carpeting, hire a licensed carpet cleaning company to steam clean and disinfect the carpet.
- Wash affected areas with a detergent solution to remove sewage-related contamination, then disinfect with a mild bleach solution (1 ounce of bleach to 1 gallon of water) and allow to dry.
- All hard surfaces, such as linoleum, hardwood floors, concrete, wood moldings, wood, and metal furniture, and so on should be thoroughly cleaned with hot water and a mild detergent (dish detergent), and then rinsed with the mild bleach solution. Let the surface air dry. Professionally clean loose rugs, drapery and so on.
- Remove and replace plaster, plasterboard, and lath that have been saturated and are soft to the touch. If the surface has only been wetted, clean as you would a hard surface, but do not saturate the plaster.
- Clean sinks, dishwashers, and other plumbing fixtures that have had sewage back-up with detergent, and then rinse with the bleach solution.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and launder clothes separately after completing the clean-up.