



For Immediate Release:

March 21, 2011

HEALTH ADVISORY: SAFE CLEAN-UP AFTER A STORM

LOS ANGELES – Many homes in Los Angeles County may have been damaged by flash flooding or mudslides due to recent storms. In most cases, special precautions do not need to be taken while cleaning up after flooding or a mudslide, as there is minimal risk of exposure to chemicals, toxins, or bacteria. Residents should not swim in, bathe in or use floodwater for cooking or drinking.

If there has been a break in a sewer line, report the break to the LA County Department of Public Works by calling (800) 675-HELP (4357) or by visiting their website at <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/>. If sewage is overflowing onto a ground surface, over the curb and/or flowing toward a storm drain, call the Recreational Waters Program immediately at (626) 430-5360, or call the LA County Operator at (213) 974-1234 (nights and weekends).

Residents should wear sturdy shoes and gloves for protection while cleaning. Face masks are not necessary. If a job appears to be too big, hire a professional cleaning service.

Food Safety:

The following is advised to maintain food safety:

- Plastic bottles of liquid, such as water, that have been covered with mud should be discarded. It is not enough to rinse off the bottle as these particles contaminate the caps, making them very difficult to decontaminate.
- Food that has not been stored in waterproof or airtight containers and has been covered with mud should be discarded. This includes products that have been stored in cardboard or other soft packaging.
- Food stored in sealed, previously unopened glass or metal cans or jars, such as baby food, should be safe for use. Clean before opening and transfer the contents to another container before eating.
- For those that have experienced power outages, it is best to throw away perishable food, such as meat, dairy products and eggs. Items that have defrosted in the freezer during a power outage should also be discarded.

For information on earthquake and disaster readiness, call (866) 999-5228 or the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1. Bilingual staff is available Monday – Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Additional information can be found on the Public Health website at www.publichealth.lacounty.gov.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community



partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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