

NEWS RELEASE

July 14, 2010

For immediate release

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Disaster victims from last week's flooding in Cheyenne County are returning to their homes, but public health officials caution residents to use common sense coupled with additional concern regarding floodwater cleanup issues.

Becky Corman, RN, is an emergency response coordinator for Panhandle Public Health District. "After the water has been removed from the basement, the walls and floors should be wiped down with water and then washed with a solution of bleach and water," Corman said. The recommended solution of bleach to water is one cup bleach to five gallons of water, but NEVER more than one cup bleach to one gallon of water.

"Open the basement windows to allow for plenty of circulation when using the bleach solution," she added. "You need to be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that may come in contact with food, such as countertops, pantry shelves, refrigerators, etc.," she added. Bleach neutralizes the mold allergens.

"Areas where small children play should also be carefully cleaned. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean them. For items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, air-dry them in the sun and then spray them thoroughly with a disinfectant. Steam clean all carpeting."

Floodwaters may contain fecal material from overflowing sewage systems and agricultural or industrial byproducts. Skin contact with floodwater does not pose a serious health risk, but there is some risk of disease from eating or drinking anything contaminated with floodwater.

If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil or saliva, have a doctor or health department determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary based on individual records.

A final concern is the large amount of pooled water remaining after the flood will lead to an increase in mosquito populations. Corman said the majority of the mosquitoes will be pests, but will not carry communicable diseases. However, you should protect yourself from mosquitoes and the possibility of contracting West Nile Virus with screens on doors and windows, wearing long sleeves and pants and using repellants containing DEET for personal protection. Do not forget to drain all standing water left in containers around your home.

For additional information about disaster recovery, visit www.pphd.org. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.