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the 1930s

# Barry-Eaton District Health Department

[www.barryeatonhealth.org](http://www.barryeatonhealth.org)

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## **Cleaning Up After A Sewer Backup**

Untreated sewage contains bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms that may cause disease. The following information is designed to help you with the proper and safe cleanup of a sewage backup in your home or place of business.

### **Personal Precautionary Measures:**

- Avoid skin contact with sewer water, especially cuts and open sores, which could become easily infected.
- Keep hands away from mucous membranes (mouth, eyes, and nose).
- Do not allow children to frequent the affected area of the sewer backup until thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Do not eat/drink anything exposed to sewer water.
- Always wash hands and exposed arms following contact with sewer water or contaminated objects/surfaces.

### **Once any standing sewer water has been eliminated from the dwelling, the following actions should be taken promptly:**

#### **Ventilate:**

- Open any windows and doors and use exhaust fan(s) to remove odors from the affected area.
- In addition, use a room de-humidifier if possible and empty it often.

#### **Cleaning Agents:**

#### **NEVER mix bleach with any ammonia-based cleaning products.**

For surface materials and objects that are salvageable:

Step 1: Clean using a solution of detergent and warm water.

Step 2: Disinfect using household chlorine bleach mixed ¼ - ½ cup for every one gallon of water.

Step 3: Allow to air-dry.

#### **Protective Clothing:**

- When using bleach or other cleaning chemicals, always wear protective rubber gloves and suitable eye protection.
- In a confined space or poorly ventilated room, a chemical respirator is strongly recommended when using bleach or any other chemical cleaning agents.

#### **Wet/Soiled Flooring:**

- If the affected area is carpeted, first wet-vac the carpet and then remove it and the pad immediately.
- Attempt to save carpets or throw rugs only if they will be very expensive to replace. In an attempt to salvage any carpet, it will first need to air-dry in the hot sun for several days. Afterward, it may be treated with carpet cleaners/deodorizers.
- Normally the carpet padding itself cannot be salvaged. Thoroughly clean and dry the subfloors before re-carpeting.
- For washable floor surfaces (i.e., concrete, tile, etc.), follow steps 1-3 above under "Cleaning Agents."

#### **Wet/Soiled Walls:**

- Wash and disinfect any affected walls 24" above the level of contamination.
- Remove and discard any soaked drywall/plaster, wood paneling, wall insulation, or wood baseboard and allow the wall cavity to thoroughly dry to help prevent mold growth.

#### **Wet/Soiled Furniture or Appliances:**

- Discard upholstered furniture, mattresses, etc.
- Wash, rinse, and disinfect wood furniture, and if possible place outside in a shady area so it can slowly dry without warping.
- If flooding occurred around the hot water heater and its insulation material has been saturated, the water heater should be discarded and replaced.
- If flooding occurred around the furnace, it should be inspected and serviced by a professional.

#### **Soiled Personal Belongings:**

- Either discard or properly wash, disinfect, and dry toys, clothing, and other soiled objects so as to avoid contamination or mold growth.