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CONTACT: DOH Office of Communications
Jessica Hammonds, Press Secretary
(850) 245-4111

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES PRECAUTIONS FOR FLOOD WATER
HEALTH RISKS.**

-Flood waters can pose health risks across the state. Learn what you can do to minimize those risks.-

TALLAHASSEE – As Tropical Storm Debby impacts the state, a large amount of rainfall is expected. The Florida Department of Health reminds individuals to be prepared for health issues related to flooding. Although skin contact with flood water does not, by itself, pose a serious health risk, health hazards are a concern when waters become contaminated. Flood waters may contain fecal material, associated bacteria and viruses.

“Governor Scott has declared a State of Emergency due to Tropical Storm Debby,” said State Surgeon General Dr. John H. Armstrong. “Our DOH team is ready to respond to the needs of communities in partnership with the Division of Emergency Management.”

DOH recommends the following precautions to prevent possible illness from flood waters:

- Basic hygiene is critical. Wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before preparing or eating food, after toilet use, after participating in flood cleanup activities, and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything that has been contaminated with flood waters.
- Do not wade through standing water. If you do, bathe and put on clean clothes as soon as possible.
- Avoid contact with flood waters if you have open cuts or sores. If you have any open cuts or sores and cannot avoid contact with flood waters, keep them as clean as possible by washing well with soap to control infection. If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention. Residents who sustain lacerations and/or puncture wounds and have not had a tetanus vaccination within the past 10 years require a tetanus booster.
- If there is a backflow of sewage into your house, wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup. Remove and discard absorbent household materials, such as wall coverings, cloth, rugs, and sheetrock. Clean walls and hard-surfaced floors with soap and water and disinfect with a solution of ¼ cup of bleach to one gallon of water.

If your plumbing is functioning slowly or sluggishly, you should:

- Conserve water as much as possible; the less water used the less sewage the septic tank must process. Minimize use of your washing machine. Go to the laundromat. Rental of a portable toilet for a temporary period may be another option.
- Do not have the septic tank pumped. Exceptionally high water tables might crush a septic tank that was pumped dry. If the fundamental problem is high ground water, pumping the tank does nothing to solve that problem.

- Do not have the septic tank and drainfield repaired until the ground has dried. Often systems are completely functional when unsaturated conditions return. Any repair must be permitted and inspected by your county health department.

“As rainfall continues and flooding occurs, DOH will help staff special needs shelters, monitor water quality, respond to emergencies, work with communities outreach to underserved individuals and serve in the Emergency Operations Center,” said State Surgeon General Dr. John H. Armstrong. “I urge Floridians to be prepared with emergency supplies, as well as personal and family disaster plans.”

To learn more about how to be prepared and create a disaster supply kit watch DOH’s [Public Service Announcement](#).

For more information about shelters in your area contact your local emergency management office at http://www.floridadisaster.org/County_EM/ASP/county.asp.

For more information on how to best prepare yourself, family and friends for an emergency, visit http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/BPR/PDFs/FamilyPrepareGuide_Eng2010.pdf

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