

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## **DURING A FLOOD**

### ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OUTAOUAIS PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Check that the water is safe to drink

#### If the water comes from a municipal water system

- Consider the water safe to drink unless you have received a contrary notice from municipal authorities.

If you have any doubt about the color, odor, or taste of the water, contact your municipality before consuming it.

#### If the water comes from a private well

- Consider the water not safe to drink, even if it appears clear and odorless. Until you know if the well water meets the standards, boil it vigorously for one minute before consuming it. You can also use bottled water;
- If you suspect chemical contamination, do not consume the water. Furthermore, it is not advisable to boil water that has been exposed to chemical contamination, particularly hydrocarbons. In this situation, only bottled water is recommended.

#### To avoid health problems related to contact with contaminated water:

- Water contaminated by flooding can contain bacteria, viruses, and chemical residues, even if the water appears normal;
- It is recommended not to allow children to play in contaminated water or on flooded areas until the ground has dried. Increased supervision is recommended for young children, as they tend to put objects in their mouths;

#### • If you must travel on flooded land:

- o Wear rubber boots and appropriate clothing;
- o Cover any wounds with a waterproof and sterile dressing; • Keep your feet dry;
- Wash your hands frequently, especially before eating, to avoid the risk of gastroenteritis;
- Discard any food or medication that has come into contact with floodwater.

#### Septic Systems

Turn off the electrical systems that power your septic system.

Avoid using your septic system to prevent sewage backup into the residence.

If you have a treatment system certified NQ 3680-910, follow the manufacturer's or maintenance professional's recommendations.

Do not empty your septic tank or holding tank during a flood, as this may damage them.

Never drive a vehicle over your septic system.

### Carbon Monoxide

• Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas that cannot be seen or smelled. Carbon monoxide is released when appliances and vehicles burn fuels such as wood, propane, heating oil, or gasoline. Breathing this gas can be very dangerous to your health and even fatal.

• Make sure you have a battery-powered carbon monoxide detector.

• If you use a generator in case of a power outage or to run your pumps, install it outside your house or garage, as far away as possible from doors and windows, and at least 7 meters from your home.

• Avoid using indoor gas-powered appliances designed for outdoor use, such as gas pumps, space heaters, barbecues, or lamps.

### Precautions if you must use a vehicle:

• Do not run the vehicle's engine in a poorly ventilated area to avoid carbon monoxide exposure. • If you experience symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning (e.g., headache, fatigue, nausea, and vomiting) or if your carbon monoxide alarm sounds, leave the premises immediately and go outside:

o Call 911;

o Leave the door open as you leave to ventilate the area thoroughly;

o Wait for a firefighter's authorization before returning inside, even for just a few minutes.

### Ensure Food Quality

After a power outage lasting more than six hours, ensure the quality of your food before consuming it.

Sort through the food in your refrigerator and freezer. Do not consume any medications that require refrigeration but could not be refrigerated. Return them to the pharmacy.

### Information

For more information on health advice during a flood, consult the Government of Quebec website at the following address:

<https://www.quebec.ca/securite-situations-urgence/urgences-sinistres-risques-naturels/quoi-faire-avant-pendant-et-apres-urgence-sinistre/inondation>