



# Health Alert

## Flooded Sewage Disposal Systems

July 2021

**To: Residents and Businesses whose septic systems, sewage holding tanks or pit privies have been or may be subject to flooding**

**Flooded sewage disposal systems are a potentially dangerous source of contamination to local water supplies; and may cause disease, if people come into direct contact with sewage.**

### Septic Systems (septic tank and absorption field)

#### **Signs that your septic system has failed due to flooding:**

- Surface water is pooled over top of the septic system;
- Sewage has backed up into your residence; or
- Sewage effluent is observed when checking monitor pipes either visually or through the use of a dip stick or similar device.

#### **If your septic system is flooded:**

- Avoid using the building's plumbing system;
- Avoid direct contact with sewage because it can make you sick;
- Do not use the plumbing system if sewage is backing up into the house. Special precautions are to be used in cleaning up sewage spills (see next page); and
- Block any floor drains to prevent sewage from entering your house.

#### **If your septic system is at risk of becoming flooded:**

- Reduce your use of the building's plumbing system (e.g., shorter showers, less laundry); and
- If possible, use an alternate system (e.g., shower, toilet in a travel trailer).

#### **Restoring your septic system:**

- Consult a local contractor or engineering firm to check your septic system prior to returning it to full use.

### Pit Privies

- Do not use your pit privy until the water level has dropped and there is no water in the pit;

- To reduce the risk of your privy contaminating the water table, put two liters of unscented household bleach into the pit every three to four days as long as water remains in the pit; and
- If your outhouse has moved during flooding, cover the pit with a piece of ply-wood to protect people and animals from falling in until the outhouse can be put back into place or the pit filled in.

## Sewage Holding Tank

A high water table under a sewage holding tank due to flooding may cause the tank to “float” and move upward if it is empty. If you have a sewage holding tank and your property has or may be subject to flooding, do not completely empty the tank when having it pumped out. Preferably, keep your tank full and use an alternate system for sewage disposal.

Please note this recommendation also applies to septic tanks. During floods, septic tanks should be kept full so that they do not "float" in high ground water.

### **Some alternatives until your sewage disposal system is operational:**

- Evacuate the residence until flooding has subsided and the sewage disposal system has been rehabilitated and is functioning normally;
- Use a self-contained privy that is regularly pumped by a local contractor or another similar alternative.

### **Cleaning up sewage:**

- To clean up spilled sewage, use a chlorine solution by adding a ½ cup of bleach to 1 gallon (4.5 liters) of water. Also, when cleaning up sewage, wear rubber gloves and any other protective clothing necessary to ensure you do not come into direct contact with sewage.

### **For further Information contact:**

#### **Environmental Health Services**

#2 Hospital Road, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3H8

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