



## WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

### For Immediate Release

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**News media calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.**

Agency Website: [www.willcountyhealth.org](http://www.willcountyhealth.org)

Twitter: WillCoHealth

### HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES TIPS TO DEAL WITH POWER OUTAGES, FLOODING

**JOLIET** – The Will County Health Department is anxious to provide some basic health and safety information in the wake of any power outages or flooding resulting from Wednesday’s two heavy rounds of thunderstorms.

Households and food service establishments that have been without power for several hours should consider discarding the perishable contents of refrigerators and coolers. Foodborne illnesses can result from consuming food products that have been spoiled due to the lack of refrigeration.

A longstanding public health adage proclaims “when in doubt, throw it out.” The contents of freezers are probably safe if ice crystals remain. Food that has thawed should be discarded, or cooked immediately.

Households that rely on private wells should consider using only bottled water, or disinfected water, until the safety of their well can be determined. Using contaminated water for cooking, drinking, dish washing, ice making, tooth brushing, and bathing can result in a potentially serious waterborne illness.

You can disinfect water by boiling it vigorously for five minutes prior to use. You can also disinfect your water by using an unscented bleach solution of five-to-10 drops per gallon of water. Mix, and let stand a minimum of 30 minutes before use.

If your well has been flooded, a sample of your well water should be tested for the presence of disease-causing bacteria. This testing can be done by private laboratories, or by the Will County Public Health Laboratory in Joliet. For information about private well water testing at the Health Department, phone 815-727-8517.

If your well is contaminated, it should be disinfected and then retested to make sure the water is safe to drink. Information about disinfecting water wells may be obtained from Will County Environmental Health (815-727-8490).

Septic systems that may be inundated by flood waters should be used carefully until they dry to normal conditions. Overuse of a water-saturated system could cause it to fail; bringing sewage contamination to



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

*Main Office*  
501 Ella Avenue  
Joliet, IL 60433  
Ph 815.727.8480  
Fx 815.727.8484

*Community Health Center*  
1106 Neal Avenue  
Joliet, IL 60433  
Ph 815.727.8670  
Fx 815.727.8852

*Eastern Branch Office*  
44 Towncenter  
University Park, IL 60466  
Ph 815.727.8803  
Ph 708.534.0800  
Fx 708.534.3455

*Northern Branch Office*  
323 Quadrangle Dr.  
Bolingbrook, IL 60440  
Ph 630.679.7000  
Fx 630.679.7015

the surface of the ground. System failure could also produce sewage backup into the home. These systems will return to a normal state given time and favorable conditions.

The first consideration should always be physical safety when dealing with a flooded basement. Never enter a flooded basement unless power has been turned off. Open the doors and windows to help remove gases in the house. Do not smoke, or use open flames that might cause accumulated gases to explode.

You can clean basement surfaces with a non-sudsing household cleaner and then rinse it as you go along. A good disinfectant may also be used to retard the growth of mold and mildew. A mix of two ounces of liquid chlorine bleach combined with a gallon of water makes an effective disinfectant for most basement surfaces.

Frequent and thorough hand washing is always recommended. Alcohol-based sanitizers should be used if you believe your water supply has been contaminated.