

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Flooded Basements May Pose Health Risks *"Sewage Back-up Adds to Flood Volume"*

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente said residents need to be aware of the health hazards posed by possible raw sewage in the water flooding many basements after touring flood damaged areas of Whitesboro.

"The heavy rainfall we've experienced over the past 24 hours has resulted in septic sewers in some areas backing up into house basements simply because the system could not handle the incredible volume of water," Picente said. *"Residents must be reminded that while skin contact with flood waters does not, by itself, pose a serious health risk, there are health concerns when that water becomes contaminated."*

Raw sewage and fecal matter result in coliforms in the water that can cause a number of diseases, including those caused by Escherichia coli or E. coli, according to health officials. The County Executive urges residents who experience flooding in their homes to follow these recommendations by the Health Department:

- Do not wade through standing water. If you do, bathe and put on clean clothes as soon as possible.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything that may have been contaminated with flood waters.
- Basic hygiene is critical. Wash your hand with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before preparing or eating food, after toilet use, after participating in flood cleanup activities or handling articles that may have been in contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- 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.
- Thoroughly disinfect food contact surfaces (counter tops, refrigerators, tables) and areas where small children play.

"Despite the anguish and frustrations we experience at these times, we must remember that while material possessions can be repaired or replaced our health is what we value most and need to protect," Picente said.