

State Emergency Operations Center
State of Louisiana
Joint Information Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LDH advises caution to residents ahead of Tropical Storm Barry

BATON ROUGE, La. – Louisiana is preparing for flooding in many regions throughout the state due to Tropical Storm Barry. The Louisiana Department of Health advises all Louisiana residents to be aware of the dangers floodwater poses and to take all appropriate precautions.

Residents are reminded that, due to the sudden nature of rain-related floods, not all flooded roadways will be marked and that local emergency resources may be under strain. It is very important to exercise extreme caution around floodwater.

Below are some useful guidelines and additional resources for all Louisianans regarding flooding, including information on where to get emergency updates.

What to do if your community experiences flooding

Stay out of floodwater

- Floodwater may be mixed with sewage or other dangerous contaminants. Shower or otherwise wash after coming in contact with floodwater. Wash clothes that come into contact with floodwater in hot, soapy water immediately afterward. Make sure children stay away from floodwater.
- Do not drive through floodwater. Water only a few feet deep can cause a vehicle to float or stall.
- Floodwater may also hide other dangers, such as exposed electrical wires or sharp objects. The safest course of action is to stay out of floodwater.

Stay tuned

- Keep aware of your situation through local radio or TV broadcasts. Keep an eye out for boil advisories for public water or other public health alerts. A list of boil advisories can be found here. Follow the guidance of emergency authorities.

Know that septic tanks may be affected

- Avoid using a septic tank if its drain field is underwater.

Take extra care regarding wildlife

- The threat posed by wild animals and insects may increase during times of flooding. Venomous snakes, alligators, leeches, ants and mosquitoes are all potentially threatening creatures that you may encounter during a flood.

After the flood

Stay aware of floodwater contamination

- Public drinking supplies may not be safe in the aftermath of a flood. Keep aware of boil advisories and other public health alerts through your local radio and TV broadcasts. If you have questions about the safety of your water, contact your water system. Information about boil advisories and other drinking water concerns is available here.
- If you have well water, you may need to disinfect your well and have it tested for contamination. Owners should wait to submit water samples for testing until they have disinfected and flushed the well. A listing of state-certified drinking water laboratories is available online. For bacterial testing, see here and for chemical testing, see here. For more information on private well water testing, see this LDH publication: Private Water Well Testing in Louisiana.

Recovery and cleaning up

- If floodwater entered your home, you must clean and disinfect your home and any items that came into contact with floodwater. Take precautions when doing so, especially if your home experienced a backup of sewage. Wear personal protective equipment, including rubber boots and waterproof gloves. Porous items that absorbed floodwater, including drywall, carpets, upholstered furniture and curtains, may need to be disposed of entirely or professionally cleaned.
- Any food that came into contact with floodwater, including canned goods, must be thrown out.

For more information from the Department of Health on floodwater safety or other emergency efforts, visit www.ldh.la.gov/emergency.

Additional resources are available from the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness at www.getagameplan.org.