



**Metropolitan Water
Reclamation District
of Greater Chicago**

Fact Sheet

April 15, 2020

Managing flood waters during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

As the regional authority for stormwater management for Cook County, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) urges the public to take precautions when managing flood waters, especially during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

While it is unknown if COVID-19 can be transmitted through contact with waterways, it is well established that illness-causing pathogens can be present in rivers, lakes and streams. Wanting to help your neighbors during times of crisis is understandable, but in doing so, continue to do your due diligence to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. Follow the CDC's guidelines that include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Practice social distancing – Stay 6 feet away from anyone while managing floodwaters.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Wear a cloth face cover to help slow the spread of virus.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> for the latest updates to help keep you and your loved ones safe. You can also visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) to learn how to make an emergency plan and toolkit.

If you experience flooding

If your home floods, avoid direct contact with the water and use disinfectants such as bleach to clean up. Learn more about cleaning with bleach at <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/bleach.html>. Open all doors and windows to allow air to circulate and dry out the premises. Dehumidify as soon as possible after flooding.

If you must touch flood water, protect yourself by wearing boots, gloves and a mask, and clean with soap and water afterwards. If necessary, consult a licensed plumber to help you determine the cause of the flooding.

Alert your municipality if you experience flooding. Stay out of flooded areas until officials allow entry, and never let children play in or near flood waters. *[continued]*

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A special note about sandbagging and dike construction

If you find yourself having to fill and place sandbags or build a small dike with others in response to rising flood waters, be sure to practice social distancing, wear a face covering, follow current CDC recommendations, and review COVID-19 adaptations for sandbagging or building a small dike such as those prepared by the Canadian Province of Manitoba.

Additional resources

American Red Cross, flood victim assistance, (847) 220-7495

Cook County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management <https://cookcountye-mergencymanagement.org/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency <https://www.fema.gov>

Illinois Department of Natural Resources <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/WaterResources/Pages/GuideToFloodproofing.aspx>

Illinois Department of Public Health <http://www.idph.state.il.us/pdf/AfterTheFlood.pdf>

Illinois Emergency Management Agency, Severe Weather Preparedness Guide <https://www2.illinois.gov/iema/Preparedness/Documents/severeweatherpreparedness.pdf>

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago <https://mwrdd.org/mwrdd-coronavirus-covid-19-updates>

Province of Manitoba, Canada <https://www.gov.mb.ca/emo/pdfs/adaptations-to-high-water-response-activity.pdf>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services <https://www.hhs.gov/climate/index.html>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security <https://www.ready.gov/>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/flooding>