

## After The Storm: Information for Plainville Residents In the Roberts Avenue Extension Area, About Outdoor Clean-up

A number of Plainville residential properties were contaminated with sewage and home heating oil brought on by heavy rains and flooding from recent storms. This fact sheet will provide information about precautions to take to help keep you safe, health risks, and how to clean up your outdoor property safely.

### General Precautions

- **If you see downed electrical lines in or near water, stay far away! Call the utility company, fire department, or police.**
- Assume that all flood water is contaminated – follow precautions below.
- Avoid contact with flood water whenever possible. Do not allow children or pets to play in flood water.
- Protect yourself if you need to come in contact with flood water. Cover up. Try not to let the water touch your skin. Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves (like dishwashing gloves), and eye protection. Make sure all cuts and scrapes are covered.
- To prevent breathing in hazardous particles, be sure to wear a dust mask if you will be disturbing dry soil or stirring up any dust.
- **Wash your hands thoroughly and often.** Wash all exposed skin that comes in contact with flood water or contaminated materials.
- Do not eat or smoke in damp or contaminated areas.

### Exposure to Sewage

Testing of flood waters in the Roberts Avenue

Extension area of Plainville after hurricane Irene revealed high levels of bacteria, indicating that sewage had contaminated the flood waters. Even though the flood waters have receded there is still some potential health risks from this sewage contamination. Such health risks will diminish with time. As the attached fact sheet on infectious disease after flooding indicates, most normal activities can be resumed in the yard 2 weeks after the flooding event. Please refer to the attached fact sheet for disease prevention precautions you should take if your home was in this flooded area.

### Exposure To Home Heating Oil

#### How Might I Be Exposed?

Home heating oil was released into the flood water when the oil tanks in several basements leaked. Most of the oil stayed inside of those basements, but some of the oily water was pumped into yards by sump pumps, or leaked outside with the flood water.

Exposure can occur by touching items soaked with oily water, or by touching or walking through oily water or residue that might be left behind on soil or grass.

## Health Concerns

The flood water diluted the oil that was released. Therefore, any exposures should be small. The oily water or residue may cause a rash, itching, or both if it gets on your skin. If this does happen, wash with soap and water. Keep cuts, scrapes, and wounds covered.

## Should I Clean Up Oil In My Yard?

Dilute, oily water may have soaked into the ground. Past experience has shown that it usually does not soak down further than a few inches. Additional clean up is usually not needed, because bacteria naturally found in the soil will "eat" the oil over time, breaking it down.

However, there may be some hot spots or areas where the oil concentrated. If you see any oily patches or puddles, black residue, or notice an oily smell in a certain area, you should report it to the Emergency Response and Spill Prevention Unit at the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). They will come out and evaluate it so that the oil can be handled properly.

### **Report**

**Outdoor Oily Patches,  
Puddles, or Odors**

**to:**

**CT DEEP 24/7  
860-424-3338  
or Toll Free at  
1-866-DEP-SPIL  
(1-866-337-7745)**

## When Will My Yard Be Safe?

Both the sewage and oil will naturally degrade within a few week. After that, you can allow children and pets to play outside as they normally do. In the meantime, here are some extra precautions that you should take.

- **Throw out any crops that you planted this year—do not eat them.** You can eat plants from next year's harvest.
- Stay away from obviously contaminated areas.
- Leave shoes outside or in the garage. This will prevent tracking contamination indoors.
- Wipe your pets' feet before they come back indoors.
- Wear gloves if you do any gardening or planting.
- Wear a dust mask and eye protection during leaf raking or lawn mowing.
- **Wash your hands!**



**For more information, call:**

**Plainville-Southington Regional Health District:  
(860) 276-6275**

**Connecticut Department of Public Health,  
Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment  
Program: 860-509-7740 For Cleanup Questions**

**Epidemiology Program: 860-509-7994 For Health  
Related Questions**