



## Renfrew County and District Health Unit

### Media Release

**For immediate release: May 11, 2017**

#### **Health Unit Recommends Precautions during Flood Conditions**

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) would like to remind residents affected by the recent flooding that they should be taking the necessary precautions to protect their health and safety.

Flooding may not only cause damage to the structure of a dwelling, the flood waters can also contain disease causing organisms, particularly in rural areas, that may pose a serious health hazard. Dug and drilled wells can easily become contaminated by flood water and the following precautions must be taken:

- Private water supplies affected by flooding should not be used until the water is tested
- Wait until flood waters have receded away from the well before testing your water
- If test results indicate there is no contamination, you may resume regular use of the water
- If test results indicate there is bacterial contamination, the well will have to be disinfected Public health inspectors with RCDHU are available to provide advice in this regard
- Water sample bottles are available at each of the health unit offices (Pembroke and Renfrew) as well as at each municipal office in the County. Please follow instructions on where to return your filled samples
- Until test results indicate a safe supply, water for drinking and personal use should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute.

Septic systems that are flooded over will become inoperative and unusable. The following precautions must be taken:

- Avoid contact with any septic system electrical device until they are dry, clean and inspected for damage
- Pump the septic tank and pump chambers as soon as possible but only after groundwater levels have dropped in order to avoid the tank from floating out of the ground or collapsing
- Tanks must be pumped by a licensed sewage hauler only and the wastes must not be discharged onto the surface of the ground or into watercourses
- Wait until flood waters have dropped to below the level of the leaching bed before resuming use of the system
- Reduce all non-essential water use until the operation of the system has returned to normal.

Building materials, clothing and furniture exposed to flood waters and backed-up septic systems may become contaminated with sewage. Some items can be cleaned and disinfected but others may need to be discarded. For further information regarding water damaged possessions, please contact the health unit at 613 735-8654 extension 555.

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