



What's in floodwater?

Floodwater can contain all sorts of nasties. The list below highlights potential dangers and will help to reinforce the message to stay out of floodwater.



WATER

Floodwater poses a danger of personal injury or drowning.

The force of water

Just 15cm (6 inches) of fast flowing water can knock a person off their feet.

30cm (1 foot) of moving water is enough to float the average family car. 60cm (2 foot) of moving water will sweep most vehicles away.

A conductor of electricity

As a conductor of electricity, floodwater can be dangerous if live power lines have fallen into the water.



SOIL

Poor visibility is a characteristic of floodwater, as it often contains debris and sediments.



HIDDEN DANGERS

Sharp objects e.g. nails / broken glass

Sharp objects which can impale or cut the skin, such as metal and broken glass, can be carried by / hidden in floodwater.

Trip hazards

Trip hazards such as raised man-hole covers, curbs and steps will be obscured by floodwater.



ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTANTS

Floodwater is often contaminated by agricultural runoff, raw sewage from overflowing sewerage systems, petrol and oil from vehicles and hazardous industrial chemicals. These can cause widespread and long-term damage to the environment and wildlife.

Even substances which may not be considered harmful to the environment and wildlife, such as milk, can cause environmental pollution. If milk from dairy farms contaminates floodwater, it can be 400 times more polluting than untreated domestic sewage.



DISEASE AND INFECTIONS

Floodwater contaminated by agricultural runoff, raw sewage and hazardous industrial chemicals poses a risk to human health, both during and after a flood.

Harmful bacteria, such as E. coli, may be present in floodwater, so it is important to clean and disinfect properties and items which have come into contact with floodwater. All food which has come into contact with floodwater should be thrown away and drinking water from the mains supply should be avoided until the local authority or water supplier has instructed it is safe.

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