

Flood zones are danger zones

Be aware of the risks before re-entering a flood zone

Numerous hazards may be present in a flood zone, and they may be difficult to spot due to the surrounding damage and the emotion of returning home. Here are some of the key hazards to be aware of before entering a flood zone.

1. **Respect evacuation orders.** Never re-enter the flood zone unless emergency management officials have indicated that you may do so.
2. **Chemical and microbiological contamination.** Flood waters may have broken open vessels containing fuel, fertilizers, or other common household chemicals. Similarly, flood water may carry dangerous pathogens after mixing with sewage, municipal or agricultural waste, or animal carcasses.
 - a. Wash your hands often and [keep minor wounds clean and covered](#). If someone exposed to floodwater become sick or a wound becomes infected, see a doctor right away.
 - b. [Identify and discard foods](#) that may have been contaminated by floodwater or have been left unrefrigerated.
 - c. Follow [this guidance](#) on how to discard or clean and disinfect any non-food items touched by flood water. Be sure to follow [BCCDC guidance](#) on using cleaners and disinfectants safely.
3. **Contaminated drinking water.** Flood water may have contaminated your well or the public drinking water system. Follow all public health advisories on public drinking water. For private wells, [assess the risk](#) of contamination, [disinfect the well](#), and [test the water](#) to ensure it is safe. Never use flood water or contaminated drinking water for drinking, preparation of baby food, personal hygiene (e.g., washing or brushing teeth) or washing dishes or surfaces. There may be [other sources](#) of safe water around the home.
4. **Flooded septic systems.** Like drinking water systems, septic systems may need to be [assessed](#) before use if the field has become saturated during a flood.
5. **Mould.** Structures that have been closed and damp for even a few days may develop mould. The US CDC provides detailed resources on [removing mould safely](#), or you may opt to hire a professional remediator. Be on the lookout for other [indoor air quality hazards](#), such as **asbestos**, during remediation activities.
6. **Unsafe structures.** Buildings may have shifted off their foundations or suffered other damage that may render them unstable. Debris, including hazardous or contaminated

items, may have been deposited onto your property. It is important to carefully [inspect the outside](#) of your home before entering, and then also inspect the inside.

7. **Electrical hazards.** Downed power lines, damaged electrical equipment, or using electric tools in standing water can be lethal. See [BC Hydro](#) for guidance on restoring electricity to a flooded home and see this [helpful resource](#) for identifying other hazards.
8. **Gas hazards.** Flood waters may have damaged gas appliances and shifted propane tanks or broken gas lines. If you smell gas, leave the building and call 911. Contact [Fortis BC](#) for more information on restoring service and see this [helpful resource](#) for identifying other hazards. If the gas is turned off, do not attempt to turn it on yourself.
9. **Carbon monoxide poisoning.** Some people may attempt to re-occupy homes before services have been restored. If so, **never** attempt to use devices like gas ranges, camp stoves or other combustion devices to heat the home, as this may result in [lethal carbon monoxide poisoning](#). Likewise, never use a generator in or near the building.
10. **Live animals.** Wounded or disoriented animals may have taken refuge in your property. Enter cautiously, make lots of noise, and leave an escape route.
11. **Don't forget about COVID-19.** Disruption due to the flood or evacuation may have resulted in exposure to someone infected with COVID-19. If you or someone you know develops COVID-19-like symptoms, use the BCCDC [self-assessment tool](#) and follow [BCCDC guidance](#) for testing and isolation.

For more information on flood prevention, response, and recovery, see the Province's website [Be prepared for floods](#) and PreparedBC's [Flood Preparedness Guide](#).