

Protecting your health in an emergency

Septic tanks and flooding: What you need to know about your septic tank after a flood

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

What's the risk?

During a flood event, septic tanks and the drainage area may become flooded. This can clog up pipes which may cause a sewage backup (smelly black liquid) in toilets/drains. Other signs your septic tank may be affected include slow draining toilets and drains, and a smell of sewage.

If you're a septic tank owner and experience any of the above, you will need to arrange temporary toilet facilities. Please refer to our factsheet on sewage disposal for temporary toilet options.



Septic tanks: What to do?

- Check gully traps for debris and silt and remove material so that it is not flushed into the tank.
- Check outlet filters on the septic tank for clogging and clean or replace if necessary. Flooding of the tank will lift scum and fats that may block the outlet or outlet filter.
- Ensure stock cannot access the drainage field area.
- Reduce water usage in your home until the septic tank system restores itself and the water table falls.

If you have concerns that the system has become damaged or clogged with silt or debris, we recommend that you have your septic tank and drainage field professionally checked and cleaned.

Refer to the Yellow Pages to locate septic tank contractors.






Important health tips

Wash and dry your hands, every time, after using the toilet, handling human waste or checking your septic tank system.



1 WET 2 SOAP 3 WASH 4 RINSE 5 DRY

DO NOT:

-  use your septic tank system until the floodwaters over the drainage field have gone
-  pump out your septic tank during flood conditions or saturated soil conditions as it may cause the tank to rise out of the ground, damaging the pipework
-  attempt to clean out the septic tank yourself – tanks may contain dangerous gases (use the Yellow Pages to locate septic tank contractors)
-  drive or operate heavy machinery over the drainage field as saturated soil is easily compacted – this will reduce the ability of the soil to absorb wastewater
-  drink water from bores/wells close to flooded septic tank systems until the water has been tested and found to be safe.



**If you feel unwell contact a doctor
or ring Healthline 0800 611 116**

**KEEP LISTENING TO YOUR RADIO FOR
INSTRUCTIONS, INFORMATION AND ADVICE**



- Newstalk ZB HB 90.3FM or 1278AM
- The Hits 89.5FM (Wairoa 99.7FM)
- The Breeze 97.5FM
- More FM on 88.7FM
- Central FM on 106FM or 105.2FM (Dannevirke)
- Wairoa 88FM
- Radio New Zealand News 630AM or 101.5FM
- RadioLive 106.3FM & 1368AM
- Radio Kahungunu 765AM & 94.5FM

Protect your health in an emergency - look after yourself and others.

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