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Division of Fire Safety
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 18, 2023

TO: General

FROM: Michael Desrochers, Executive Director, Division of Fire Safety

SUBJECT: Plumbing Safety During Flood Response and Recovery

Potable water piping and sanitary drainage piping systems connected to a structure could be damaged. The force of rapid flood water can dislodge plumbing fixtures, fittings, appliances causing piping connections to be damaged and disconnected from the distribution system and or appliance.

The damaging effects of flood water could immediately affect the potability of your water supply/distribution system. Remember, carried by the flood water; oil, raw sewage, chemicals, garbage, airborne and waterborne pathogens, and other contaminants posing health/safety concerns.

For drinking water restrictions please contact the Health Dept. <https://healthvermont.gov/flood>

Plumbing fixtures, appliances, pipes, and fittings submerged or adversely impacted by flood water need to be inspected, serviced and/or replaced by a licensed professional. Some backflow assemblies can allow contaminated water to enter the piping under certain conditions during a flood. Disconnected or open potable water piping submerged by flood water must be properly flushed and sanitized prior to being placed back into service. The piping, fixtures, fittings, appliances will also have a contaminated residue that should be cleaned off and sanitized as well. (1 tablespoon of bleach for 5 gallons of water for 24 hours or 4 tablespoons of bleach 5 gallons of water for 3 hours)

Plumbing fixtures, boilers, furnaces, and water heaters, that have been subjected to flood waters will need to be serviced and or replaced by a licensed professional. In general, all electrical motors, electrical controls and ignition components submerged will need to be replaced. Contaminants found in flood water will quickly corrode electrical contacts increasing the risk of fire. A licensed plumber should check the drainage system for damaged, misaligned, or dislodged piping and fittings.

This would be a good time to consider moving affected water heaters and heating appliances to upper levels proactively when possible. Prior to re-locating appliances, you should contact a Division Plumbing and Heating Inspector or an Assistant State Fire Marshal for guidance.

<https://firesafety.vermont.gov/staff-contact> Plumbing work notices may be required for some of this work, however we have waived the permit fee.

