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## Category 3 Water

(Black Water or Sewage Water)

### EPIC Fact Sheet

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***Know the origin of your flood water so you know how to respond appropriately***

#### **General information:**

- Category 3 water is:
  - Water from beyond a plumbing trap in fixtures such as toilets, sinks or shower drains (sewage or wastewater)
  - Water that came in contact with soil such as flood water that enters a building through a door or wall (surface water runoff)
- Category 3 water can make staff, occupants, and vendors sick.
- Category 3 water is presumed to contain a variety of chemical contaminants (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) and/or pathogens (feces, blood, etc.). Testing for ALL potential hazards is not practical, so the presence of hazards is presumed.
- Disinfecting items touched by Category 3 water may not always be appropriate.
  - Many disinfectants are not effective in “killing” the entire array of potential pathogens.
  - Many of the organisms found in sewage water are toxic or allergenic even when those organisms are killed.
  - Disinfection is ineffective against chemical contaminants.

#### **Tips and tricks to know AND hurdles to avoid:**

- Restrict access in the flood area to prevent slips and falls and to prevent tracking of contaminants.
- For all water intrusions, identify the water source and stop the water if possible. Document the water source in writing and in photos. If flood is the result of a broken fixture, keep the broken part.
- Porous building materials such as drywall, pressed wood cabinets/furniture, carpet, carpet pad, etc. that are wetted by Category 3 water should not be cleaned and dried, but instead should be removed and replaced.
- Time is of the essence, the difference between drying or replacing many building materials could be a matter of hours.

*The Disaster Ready Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (DR EPIC) program provides education and technical assistance for skilled nursing providers throughout the state. Individual providers will need to exercise their independent discretion in how to apply this information and technical assistance to the unique operation of each facility. For that reason, a facility's exercise of its professional judgment and due diligence in utilizing the program for infection control and risk management practices is solely within the facility's control for which it is entirely responsible.*

- If you need help, call a professional remediation firm and/or an industrial hygienist. The sooner you call, the faster the mitigation starts.

### Photos with descriptions:



Sewage backed up into a tub. Sewage can be harmful.



Rain water that travels over soil and enters your building harmful can be a hazard. Here's a portable toilet floating in flood water that clearly illustrates the potential contaminants in surface water runoff.

### Resources to learn more:

- Web links to and description of relevant laws, standards, guidelines or books
- For other specialty concerns, please reference the *IICRC S500 Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Water Damage Restoration*.
- EPA
  - Floods: [www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/flooding](http://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/flooding)
  - Flood Cleanup and IAQ: [www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/flood-cleanup-protect-indoor-air-quality](http://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/flood-cleanup-protect-indoor-air-quality)
  - Emergencies and IAQ: [www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/emergencies-and-iaq](http://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/emergencies-and-iaq)FEMA Floods: [www.ready.gov/floods](http://www.ready.gov/floods)
- CDC
  - Floods: [www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods)
- American Red Cross
  - Floods: [www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/flood](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/flood)
- American Lung Association
  - Floods and Water Damage: [www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/outdoor/emergencies-and-natural-disasters/floods-and-water-damage.html](http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/outdoor/emergencies-and-natural-disasters/floods-and-water-damage.html)
  - Additional EPIC resources
    - Leave a message on the Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (EPIC) hotline at 602-241-4644,
    - Email at [EPIC@AZHCA.org](mailto:EPIC@AZHCA.org), or
    - Visit the EPIC Web Resource Pages at [www.EPIC.DisasterReadyaz.org](http://www.EPIC.DisasterReadyaz.org)

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