



HSE ADVICE

DEALING WITH FLOODING

INTRODUCTION

With weather forecasters predicting an annual increasing risk of very wet weather and flash flooding, health and safety professionals may wish to acquaint themselves with recently published advice by the HSE on how to recover businesses safely following a flood.

The recently published information, which is available here; <https://www.hse.gov.uk/business/recovering-your-business.htm> may be useful both in terms of minimising risks from floodwaters and cleaning up safely. The information was published by the HSE after a number of businesses were badly affected by flooding after the sustained bad weather in the winter of 2013/2014 and recently updated.

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The HSE offers a number of pointers on minimising the risks from floodwater, including:

- avoiding coming into direct contact with floodwater if possible, as it can contain sewage and chemicals (so it is best to wear waterproof gloves and rubber boots)
 - taking care if going into floodwater is unavoidable (there could be hidden dangers like sharp objects, raised manhole covers and pollution)
 - keeping open cuts and sores clean and using waterproof plasters to protect them
 - washing hands with soap and warm water after contact with floodwater or after cleaning up.
- Hazards to be aware of when cleaning up premises may include:
- containers of hazardous chemicals possibly damaged during the flooding (suitable protective gloves should be used)
 - leaked chemicals in floodwater, especially in enclosed spaces where fumes may build up (it may be necessary to seek information on hazardous substances)
 - gas appliances after flooding (it may be necessary to seek advice on gas appliances)
 - asbestos (where specialist advice should be sought)
 - rats, which can move after their nests have been flooded (rat droppings or urine can spread disease so hands should be washed thoroughly after contact with floodwater)

For guidance on flooding in general read the [Environment Agency guidance on GOV.UK](#)



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