



Renfrew County and District Health Unit  
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, 4:15 p.m. May 3, 2023)

### Flood Water Safety

Ongoing rising water levels may pose a risk to the health and safety of residents. The [Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board](#) has indicated that: "Levels in the Pembroke area are expected to approach the major flooding threshold over the coming days. Levels on Lake Coulonge are already above the major flooding threshold and are expected to rise higher over the coming days. Chats Lake and Lake Deschenes levels are expected to exceed their major flooding thresholds over the coming week." The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has continued the Flood Warning for [Pembroke District](#).

Flood water and water ponding around wells can affect drinking water safety. Renfrew County and District Health Unit is recommending that residents with water wells **in contact with flood water**:

1. boil their water for one minute at a rolling boil before drinking, food preparation or brushing teeth with the water,
2. use bottled water or,
3. use water from an alternate potable water source.

Well water should be tested for bacteria after flood waters recede. Water sample bottles can be picked up and dropped off at the Renfrew County and District Health Unit. An additional well water sample bottle pick-up/drop-off location has been added in Westmeath at Kenny's Store at 2164 Westmeath Rd, Westmeath, ON K0J 2L0. For more locations, visit <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/safe-water/>.

During floods, the ground can become saturated, preventing proper operation of septic systems. If your septic system has been affected, avoid using the septic system if possible, or reduce the amount of water used by limiting toilet flushing, dishwashing, washing clothes, and showering.

Do not pump your septic system when the ground around it is still saturated. High ground water levels may cause an empty septic tank to float out of the ground and damage the inlet and outlet fittings.

Flood waters can be contaminated with sewage and cause illness. The following tips will help protect your family during flooding events:

- Keep family members and pets away from and out of the flood water.
- DO NOT enter areas where electrical systems have been affected by flood water, as there is a risk of electrocution. Always wait for clearance from an electrical authority before entering these areas.
- Building materials, clothing and furniture exposed to flood waters may be contaminated with sewage or other hazards and can support the growth of mould. Some items can be cleaned and disinfected; others may need to be thrown out.
- Wash or sanitize your hands after contact with flood water or handling items contaminated by flood water (e.g., sandbags).
- Do not drive through, stand, or walk in any moving water. Never underestimate the swiftness of the water – flooded rivers and streams are unpredictable.
- Do not attempt to drive in flood water. Six inches of fast-moving water can knock over an adult and two feet of rushing water can carry away a vehicle.
- Follow proper filling and placement procedures when using sandbags, including [good lifting techniques](#) to help avoid injury. For further details, visit [Flood Preparation and Recovery \(countyofrenfrew.on.ca\)](#).

Visit <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/emergency-preparedness/be-flood-ready/> for more information on what to do before and during flooding events.

Visit the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry: [Flood Forecasting and Warning Program \(gov.on.ca\)](#) daily to view your community flood risk. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry asks the public to include **#ONFlood** when posting pictures of flooded areas on social media, it can help to have first-hand reports.

Visit the Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board at <https://ottawariver.ca/> to stay up to date on Ottawa River flows and levels.

Other key information websites:

- Ontario Power Generation (Madawaska River/Ottawa River): [www.opg.com](http://www.opg.com)
- Renfrew Power Generation (Bonnechere River) water levels and freshet: [www.renfrewpg.ca/water-levels-flow-history](http://www.renfrewpg.ca/water-levels-flow-history)

For more information, visit <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/emergency-preparedness/>, call 1-800-276-1097 extension 505, or email [environmentalhealth@rcdhu.com](mailto:environmentalhealth@rcdhu.com).

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