



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

## For Immediate Release

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(Pembroke, Ontario, April 17, 2026)

### **RCDHU Recommends Safety Precautions as Flood Waters Rise**

The Ministry of Natural Resources has issued a Flood Warning for [Pembroke District](#). Rising water levels may pose risks to the health and safety of residents. Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) is advising residents to take precautions to protect their drinking water, septic systems, and personal safety.

#### **Drinking Water Safety**

Flood water and standing water around wells can contaminate drinking water. RCDHU recommends that residents with wells affected by floodwater do one of the following:

- boil water at a rolling boil for one minute before using it for drinking, food preparation, or brushing teeth;
- use bottled water; or
- use an alternate potable water source.

Well water should be tested for bacteria after flood waters recede. For water sample bottle pick up and drop off locations, visit <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/safe-water/>.

#### **Septic System Safety**

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 Safety**

Flood waters can be contaminated with sewage and cause illness. If your property is at higher risk of flooding, consider the following preventive steps.

- Keep your family members and pets out of flood water.
- Wash or sanitize your hands after contact with flood water or handling items contaminated by flood water (e.g., sandbags).
- 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 hard-surface items can be cleaned and disinfected; others may need to be thrown out.
- 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.
- Ensure drainage ditches and similar features are clear and functioning.
- Clearly label shut-off valves and note how to turn off gas, water, and power.
- If evacuation is required, turn off utilities before leaving if safe to do so.
- Move valuables and items that could be damaged to higher areas.
- Maintain a stocked emergency kit with documents, cash, safe drinking water, food, and medications.
- 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.

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 Government of Ontario: [Flood Forecasting and Warning Program \(gov.on.ca\)](https://www.gov.on.ca/flood/) daily to view your community flood risk.

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

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).