

## Flood waters health risk

Understanding the health risks associated with flooding and water damage is critical for both homeowners and professionals in the water damage restoration industry. Flooding and water damage can severely impact health through the amplification of mold spores, bacteria, and the activation of harmful chemicals. These risks are magnified by the presence of moisture, which can catalyse the growth and spread of biological contaminants.

The IICRC S500 standard document is a crucial resource in the water damage restoration industry, categorizing water damage into four levels based on the biological load present. This standard highlights that even clean drinking water contains viruses and bacteria that can proliferate under conditions of water damage. Flooding introduces additional contaminants from soil, drains, and sewers, including chemicals and pathogens, with the potential for bio-amplification to double every 15 minutes under certain conditions.

The health risks posed by water damage and flooding are both acute and chronic. Acute effects may include respiratory issues and flu-like symptoms, often immediately following exposure. Chronic effects, such as fatigue and malaise, may arise from long-term exposure to contaminants from past flooding events, often overlooked by those affected.

The remediation of water-damaged homes typically involves professionals equipped with the knowledge to address air and surface contamination. Effective remediation includes the use of drying equipment, ventilation, and disinfectants. However, thorough cleaning is essential before disinfectant application, as no product can eliminate all contaminants without proper surface preparation.

Building Forensics plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of remediated buildings. By conducting appraisals and visiting sites post-remediation, Building Forensics assesses health and safety risks, identifying any remaining contamination that could lead to acute or chronic health issues. This approach ensures that buildings are not only structurally restored but also safe for occupants, addressing the immediate and long-term health risks associated with flooding and water damage.

Addressing water damage promptly and effectively is essential to managing the health risks associated with flooding. It requires a comprehensive approach that

includes understanding the nature of water damage, implementing appropriate remediation techniques, and ensuring the safety of building occupants through thorough assessments post-remediation.

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