



Thursday 1 February, 2018

Public health advice to Coasters re Cyclone Fehi storm

Although the storm conditions on the West Coast appear to be abating in many areas, it is still a dynamic weather system and it hasn't cleared the West Coast yet. West Coast DHB and Community and Public Health are therefore issuing the following general health and wellbeing advice:

Stay ready and informed

- Keep your emergency kit, including supplies of clean drinking water and an alternative means of cooking in case of power outages, handy for a time after services are restored. If you are in a flood-prone area, as a precaution you may choose to pack a bag with warm and waterproof clothing and bedding in case you need to evacuate quickly. Don't forget to provide for pets. To check what you may need, visit www.getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/emergency-survival-items
- Use whatever means available to stay informed, but radio is your best option when the power is out.

Water

- Your local council might need to put in place boil water notices, even after the weather event has passed. This means you need to boil or treat all water from taps / tankers before drinking, brushing teeth or using in food preparation.
- Bringing water to the boil is sufficient to kill bugs. (You do not need to boil for three minutes)
- Water that is visibly clear can be made safe to drink by adding half a teaspoon of a standard (unscented) bleach such as Clorox or Janola to 2 litres of water.
- Employers should provide boiled or bottled water if they can.
- Check your water supply and if you think it has been affected by surface run-off, don't use it for drinking purposes.

Food

- If you do lose power, avoid opening your fridge and freezers unnecessarily. Use perishable foods first but if in any doubt as to their freshness (if they look or smell funny, or the power has been off for some time), throw them away. High risk items include meat, fish and poultry. If you think they may have been at room temperature for two or more hours, do not eat them – if in doubt, throw it out.

- Have an alternative means of cooking available – i.e. a gas burner, in case the power goes out. Make sure cooking areas are well ventilated.

Workplaces

- If you run a (non-essential) business and the Police are warning people to stay at home for their safety, look after your staff by allowing them to stay home for the duration of the storm.

Health and wellbeing

- Check on neighbours and vulnerable people near where you live to reassure them and ensure they have everything they need.
- If you need to see a GP and have trouble getting there, phone them for advice. Even if they are closed your call will be answered by a trained registered nurse who can advise you on what to do. **In an emergency, always ring 111.**
- If you require essential prescription medications and your supply won't last until Saturday, call your normal GP number for advice.
- Avoid contact with flood waters if you can, they will be contaminated by sewage and there is a danger of trauma and electrocution. Short wades, such as to check on neighbours, may be safe. If you do come into contact with flood waters, change out of any wet clothes and shoes and put them aside to be washed later. Wash skin that has come into contact with flood waters, and your hands as soon as you reasonably can - or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

ENDS

This advice has been sent on behalf of the West Coast DHB from the Canterbury DHB comms team.

Please call Jendy Harper on 027 567 5343 or Mick O'Donnell on 027 261 4824 (rather than West Coast comms) if you have any further enquiries.