



Fact Sheet

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WHAT SANDY SURVIVORS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PETROLEUM SPILLS

If your home has been affected by a flood that caused an oil spill or any type of petroleum release in or near your home, contact the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) at **1-877-WARNDEP 24 Hour Hotline (1-877-927-6337; Option 2)** to report the spill.

Oil spills usually cause strong odors and can contaminate indoor air. **Do not stay in a building with strong oil odors because inhaling oil vapors may cause adverse health effects.**

Oil and Water in Your Home

Use absorbent pads to collect oil. Purchase absorbent pads from auto or marine supply stores, or use cloth diapers or pads from medical supply stores or pharmacies.

Controlling Odors

Close all doors, laundry chutes or create partitions with sheets of plastic.

Fans help control odors. Place a stationary fan to **exhaust contaminated areas by blowing air out** through a single window or door. Keep windows near the exhaust air window closed to prevent contaminated air from re-entering your home.

Be careful operating central heating or central air conditioning systems – they may spread odors and contaminate the ventilation system.

Oil Coated Belongings, Debris and Building Materials

Clean hard-surfaces such as glass or metal with soap, detergent, non-solvent degreaser or other cleaners. Avoid cleaning with solvents such as acetone, xylenes or turpentine, which may be flammable and hazardous to your health.

Discard porous materials such as wood, boxes, fabrics, sheetrock or insulation. Move contaminated materials outside.

Place contaminated materials on plastic and cover with more plastic until you have documented them for insurance claims then dispose of them in regular trash.

Use cat litter, sawdust or other absorbent powders such as bentonite or zeolite to absorb any remaining oil on floors and solid surfaces. Purchase absorbent powders from automotive or marine supply stores, pet stores, pharmacies and home improvement stores.

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Check with a professional cleaning company for information on cleaning or deodorizing household furnishings.

When doing any cleanup work, minimize your exposure. Wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and gloves (rubber if available) to reduce exposure to skin. Work in areas that are well-ventilated as described above.

Furnaces and Boilers

Do not start oil-fired furnaces or boilers until they have been checked by a service technician. Furnaces and boilers generate exhaust gases including carbon monoxide. If a furnace or boiler or their exhaust ducts are damaged, deadly gases may be released inside your home. Be sure all flue vents are clear so gases exhaust freely. Be sure all tank vents are clear. When fans are being used, the potential for back drafting should be evaluated.

Drinking Water Wells

Drinking water from wells contaminated by petroleum will often have an odor. If it smells oily, do not drink the water.

Potential Health Effects

Exposure to high levels of petroleum products can cause health effects, primarily on the nervous and respiratory systems. People who inhale elevated air levels of fuel oil vapors for even short periods of time experience nausea, increased blood pressure, eye irritation, headaches, light-headedness, and poor coordination.

Petroleum products may cause irritation and blistering in some people when they come into contact with the skin. Older adults, the very young, and people with respiratory diseases may be especially sensitive to the effects of inhaling petroleum vapors.

Temporary Relocation

If strong odors are present in your home, limit the time spent there or consider relocating temporarily until indoor air quality improves.

Source: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

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