

Our colleagues at the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) provided the guidance below to support child care programs in identifying the safety of a playground following a flood.

The recent floods may have affected the safety of playgrounds. Physical hazards from leftover debris are the biggest risk to people who use the playground as they could result in injuries.

Contaminants from flood water are unlikely to pose a risk, as germs do not live very long in sunlight and rain helps wash them away, while chemicals, if present, would be at very low levels.

Washing your hands after being in a playground is always a good idea. If children play in the dirt, try to prevent them from putting dirt in their mouths.

If you see visible signs of chemical contamination, such as an oil sheen, do not use the playground and report this to the State of Vermont spills team by calling 1-800-641-5005 or 802-828-1138.

If your playground was submerged in floodwater, here are some tips for reopening it after it has dried out.

- Avoid using the playground if the area is very dusty, especially if you have breathing problems.
- Wear protective clothing such as pants and long sleeves, boots, and gloves to protect yourself as you assess and clean up your playground. If it is dusty, wear goggles and an N95 respirator.
- When the playground has completely dried out, assess the structures for any damage.
- Remove any floodwater debris.
- Remove as much silt as possible.
- If the playground structure was under floodwater or has visible silt from the floodwater, wash the structure with soap and water.
- Remove debris and silt from sandboxes and turn the sand over so that sunlight can reach and dry out all layers of the sand. If there is too much debris and silt to clean, remove the sand and replace it with fresh sand.
- Remove debris and silt from woodchips or tire mulch ground cover. If there is too much debris and silt to remove, remove the material and replace it with fresh material.
- Wash your hands after cleaning.

Additional Resource

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Environmental Health Services (EHS) – [Reopening Outdoor Public Spaces After Flooding](#)

Questions

For questions about this guidance, you may contact Sarah Owen, State Toxicologist with VDH at sarah.c.owen@vermont.gov or 802-863-7598.

As always, please remember the Licensor on Duty (LOD) is here and available to support you and your program; you can reach them at ahs.dcfcdchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov or 800-649-2642 option 3.