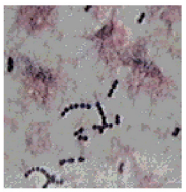
Pathogens are "germs" which cause disease and appear in the form of viruses, bacteria and fungus.



Streptococcus
(a greatly enlarged picture of bacteria)

Pathogens are normally present in large numbers in sewage wastes. The nature and extent of potential disease risks from sewer backups and floodwaters will depend in large part on the concentration of contaminants in the waters. Any backup of combined or sanitary sewage into your basement requires the proper cleanup of the materials that have come into direct contact with the contaminated waters. Even floodwater or stormwater which has not been directly impacted by sewage discharges might to contain a wide variety of microbiological organisms (e.g., from animal wastes, street runoff, etc.) and must be properly managed.

Some of these organisms, such as mold and mildew like to grow in damp environments and could present a health risk from chronic exposure in certain individuals. Preventive measures, and proper cleanup procedures are essential in reducing the risk of infection. This guidance is intended to assist the public in these actions.

The Albany Water Board recognizes that sewage backup and street flooding conditions can occur in many places within the City of Albany during severe wet weather events. The frequency, duration and quantity of sewage backups varies depending on many factors including topography (elevation of buildings relative to street and sewer), sewer capacity, infrastructure constraints and on the severity of the storm event.

The Albany Water Board has instituted a Backwater Valve Grant Program. If you have repeated events of combined sewage backup, you should apply for assistance in the cost of installing a new backwater valve. In many instances the grant stipend pays the full cost. Call 518-434-5300 to obtain an application. Other steps may reduce the extent of damage from basement sewage backups. Among them are:

a) Waterproofing the building foundation;
b) Sealing cracks in basement floor or foundation walls;
c) Raising any sink, toilet or washing machine, etc. or closing floor drains;
d) Directing building gutter downspouts away from the foundation;
e) Protecting heaters and hot water tanks by raising them above basement grade, if possible.
f) Raising furniture and valuables using blocks or racks above levels where backups have previously reached, if possible.

Cleanup of Basements

Once the storm subsides, the sewage in your basement should go back down through either floor drains or through the sump pit (area where sewer pipes enter your basement). If it doesn't recede, a blockage may have occurred. Carefully evaluate the amount of water remaining in your basement. You should not enter into flooded waters since the possibility exists that a live electric wire may exist at or below the water level. You may have to contact a plumber or a professional cleaning company in this case.

When reporting sewage backups to your insurance agent, it should be reported as a sewage backup and not a "flood". Some policies cover sewage backups or pipe failures.

Once water recedes and the basement can be safely entered, cleanup operations should commence. The most important step is to restore the environment to a dry state and to salvage any valuable property. The longer that sewage remains in the basement, the greater the potential for illness and more serious damage to your home and your possessions.

In any sewage cleanup, even if the water appears clear, you must assume that pathogens are present.

Protective Steps:

Wear

a. Protective gloves
b. Goggles
c. Boots
d. Rain coat and rain pants (like golf rain protection suit, if available)

After use, disinfect these items or dispose of them

Avoid

a. Direct contact with sewage
b. Any contamination to your face or eyes
c. Any contact with cuts and scrapes. Immediately disinfect any cuts or scrapes that comes in contact with sewage.

When electrical equipment can be operated safely, remove any excess water utilizing pumps, wet vacuums or through the use of mops. Dehumidifiers and ventilation using fans can be very helpful in restoring dryer conditions. All solid waste should be collected and disposed of by discharging down a drain or in household trash..

Damaged contents should be sorted to determine what can be saved and what must be discarded. The following guide should be used to evaluate household materials and furnishings.