

Purpose: This message map is designed to assist LPHAs in conducting public messaging around concerns over increased microbial hazards in lakes affected by flooding.

Main Message	Supporting Messages
<p>Heavy rains and flooding can increase hazards and health risks in lakes and rivers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floods can overwhelm septic systems and increase runoff from the environment, resulting in increased levels of tiny organisms, like bacteria, viruses, and parasites, in lakes. This increases the risk of infection for waders or swimmers. • Flooded lakes may also contain other hazards to swimmers and boaters, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - physical hazards hidden underwater (e.g., docks, sunken boats, storm debris, rocks); and, - chemical contamination from spills or damaged vehicles. • Floods may also cause levels of algae in lakes to increase. Some kinds of algae can cause rashes, diarrhea, or respiratory issues for humans or pets that come in contact with them.
<p>Floods can increase the number of germs and other tiny organisms always present in lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water, and introduce new ones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each lake is unique and has different natural levels of tiny organisms, like bacteria, viruses, and parasites that are always present and can pose a risk to swimmers. • These organisms can come from multiple sources including wildlife, runoff from agriculture, and other human activities. Floods can increase their numbers or introduce new organisms that can cause sickness. • Most disease-causing germs from waste or runoff can only live a few weeks in lakes.
<p>When in doubt, stay out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your lake water looks or smells different than normal, use caution and wait until the water returns to its normal state before engaging in recreational water activities. • When going out on lakes or rivers recently affected by floods, practice safe swimming behaviors. Do not swallow water or submerge your head. Never swim alone. Do not go swimming if you have open wounds, or recent piercings or surgery. • Thoroughly shower after going in any lakes or rivers, and contact your doctor if you feel ill after swimming.