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**HURRICANE DENNIS INFORMATION SHEET **

HURRICANES CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS WITH SEWAGE SYSTEMS

TALLAHASSEE – Following the passage of the hurricane, you may be experiencing difficulties with your sewage system not functioning properly. If you have a septic system that operates by a dosing pump, it will not function without electricity. You should refrain from using water in your home as much as possible until electricity is restored. Without the pump working, the tanks will fill and may cause backups of sewage in your home.

General precautions:
• Do not let children play in flood waters as these waters may be contaminated by sewage.

• If you live in a low-lying or flood-prone area, the ground in your area may be saturated from heavy rainfalls or flooding from the hurricane. You should use household water as little as possible to prevent backups of sewage into your home.

What should I do if sewage backs up?
• If a sewage backup has occurred in your home, stay out of affected areas and keep children away. If your entire home has been saturated, abandon the home until all affected areas, including but not limited to carpets, rugs, sheetrock, drywall, and baseboards, have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

• If sewage has overflowed in open areas or streets, etc., avoid these areas and keep children out of these areas.

• If you are having problems in areas served by sewer systems, please contact your utility company to insure they are aware of problems in your area.

PROPER SEWAGE CLEAN UP PROCEDURES

Heavy rainfall from hurricanes may result in flood waters that are contaminated with sewage. Proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures are recommended to prevent illness.

How to clean up sewage contaminated items and sewage spills inside your home:
• Wear protective clothing such as rubber boots and waterproof gloves.
• Clean walls, hard-surfaced floors, and other household surfaces with soap and water and disinfect with a solution of 1/4 cup of bleach in one gallon of water. Once cleanup is complete dry out affected items to prevent the growth of mold.
• Do not mix ammonia cleansers with bleach as toxic vapors will form.
• Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry clean them.
• Discard Items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned, such as mattresses, carpeting, wall coverings and upholstered furniture.

For spills outside your home:
• Contact your utility or a registered septic tank contractor for clean up.
• Minor spills requiring immediate attention may be disinfected with regular garden lime from a garden shop. Follow the lime container’s label instructions for personal protective equipment needed.
  o Sprinkle the lime onto the spill so the spill is dusted mostly white on the surface. If the residue is thicker in some places use a rake to mix the lime and the residue.
  o After a day, rake up the thicker residue and place it in a trash bag for disposal with the other trash. Use a sprinkler or hose to water the lime and residue into the soil.
  o Let the area dry in the sun a day before allowing access. If there is still white lime dust visible on the yard, water it in until the white dust is gone.

Follow proper hygiene procedures to prevent illness:
• Keep hands and fingers away from the nose, mouth, eyes and ears.
• Wash hands with soap and water immediately after cleanup efforts as well as before eating or drinking.
• Keep fingernails short and clean. Use a stiff brush to remove dirt and foreign materials.
• Do not store fresh work clothes with used work clothes.
• Shower after each work day.

For further information, please contact your local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

The Florida Emergency Information Line: 1-800-342-3557

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