

May 13, 2005

ENVIRO MATTERS

Hurricane Season Begins in June – Is Your Home Prepared?

Tropical Storm Isabel in September 2003 was no small event. With a water surge of 8 feet in some areas, homes and communities were seriously damaged. More than a year and a half later, some are still rebuilding. To ensure that State and local agencies are ready for future events, Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., ordered an appraisal of existing shortcomings in the Tropical Storm Isabel response and updated plans to fill the gaps. The multi-agency assessment was completed in September 2004 and is available on line at: www.mdp.state.md.us/pdf/tropical_storm.pdf .

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) offers the following reminders for residents in flood prone areas to protect themselves and their property.

Home fuel tanks

Home fuel tanks are vulnerable to high water. Spilled oil can pose a threat to public health and the environment. In the aftermath of Tropical Storm Isabel, MDE assisted in the collection of approximately 50,000 gallons of oil from dislodged oil tanks and in the cleanup of oil-contaminated soil from 170 properties. The soil cleanup effort cost approximately \$2.25 million in public funds.

State regulations currently require that all new and replacement tanks in floodplain areas be properly anchored or installed at or above the design flood elevation. Fuel storage devices in mobile home parks and private propane tanks must also be anchored. Additional information about anchoring home fuel tanks is available at: www.mde.state.md.us/Programs/WaterPrograms/Flood_Hazard_Mitigation/fuel tanks.asp .

Well protection

Individual drinking water wells in coastal and flood prone areas are required to meet certain construction and maintenance standards to avoid contamination during storms and other events. To be approved for use, new wells must be “protected from surface wash or flooding.” In the case of existing wells, well owners are required to protect the ground water resource, which includes maintaining the well “in a manner which prevents the entrance of water” and other foreign material. These protections are easy to accomplish with a proper well cap. A fact sheet on well protection in flood prone areas is available at: www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/Fact%20Sheet%20Flood%202004.pdf .

Mold

Mold is difficult to control after a flood or in the face of any persistent moisture. In the event of a flood, homeowners will find that they are responsible for cleanup in their own homes. Tenants have certain protections through local nuisance statutes, local housing codes, and the State minimum livability code. For ways to prevent and cleanup indoor mold, visit www.mde.state.md.us/CitizensInfoCenter/Health/mold_information.asp .

Storms can present major challenges to families, communities, businesses, and other institutions. MDE stands ready to serve you through its Emergency Response, Hazardous Waste, Solid Waste, Oil Control, Wells and Septics, and the Flood Hazard Mitigation Programs. For more information, please call MDE at 410-537-3000 or visit www.mde.state.md.us or visit www.mema.state.md.us .



Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor
Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor



Kendl P. Philbrick, Secretary
Jonas A. Jacobson, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Boulevard • Baltimore, Maryland 21230
www.mde.state.md.us • 800.633.3101