

For Anyone Working at the Rouge River

Issued by the Health Departments of Wayne and Oakland Counties

Projects to clear or move logs and debris in and around the Rouge River can expose you to contaminated water or subject you to cuts and abrasions. While there is no documented evidence of people acquiring waterborne illness from the Rouge, that possibility exists. Portions of the Rouge are contaminated by overflows from combined sewer discharges, non-point source pollution, municipal or industrial discharges and leaks, etc. The risk of contracting disease is likely greater during the two or three days immediately following major rainstorms.

The following recommendations are intended to reduce the potential for injury or disease.

Personal Health

- ✿ You should be in good health with no open wounds or cuts.
- ✿ Immunizations should be up-to-date, especially those for tetanus and polio.
- ✿ Immune globulin may be indicated following direct exposure to sewage contamination. The necessity for immune globulin varies depending on the circumstances of each case. Consultations and recommendations regarding the need for immune globulin following exposure is available to any individual by contacting their local health department or private physician.

Wearing Apparel

- ✿ Work gloves and protective clothing should be worn to prevent cuts and abrasions. We recommend wearing long pants and a long-sleeved shirt to protect arms and legs.
- ✿ Wear boots or shoes with sturdy soles to prevent puncture, and try to keep lower extremities dry. Wearing tennis or basketball shoes or sneakers is discouraged.
- ✿ If there is full body immersion, i.e., submersion below the water surface, then you should go to a site where you can wash thoroughly with clean water and soap, dry, and put on dry clothing. Special attention should be given to cleaning the face, hands and shampooing the hair. It is suggested that each person have an extra set of clothing available.

Practices at the Work Area

- ✿ Splashing river water by individuals as pranks is strongly discouraged.
- ✿ Try to avoid getting water around your mouth, nose, ears and eyes.
- ✿ Avoid contact with river water as much as possible. Pick up litter and easily accessible debris along the stream banks. Only attempt to collect floating material if you have waders and/or nets. Only wade into the stream if you have waders and you are sure of the footing and the current is weak.
- ✿ Should your eyes be exposed to river water, it would be advisable to rinse them with clear, clean water.
- ✿ It is suggested that you work at a moderate pace. Do not over exert yourself. If you begin to tire, take a break, as fatigue can precipitate accidents.
- ✿ Get help with heavy objects.
- ✿ Avoid slippery areas and exercise extra care when handling sharp objects. If the river is too deep or the banks are especially muddy, take extra care. If it seems dangerous, do not work in that area.
- ✿ **If a wound occurs, no matter how minor, stop work at once!** If the wound does not need attention of a health professional, wash it with clean soap and water and apply an antiseptic solution. Discontinue working at the river or with the material removed from the river if the wound cannot be protected from contamination.
- ✿ Eating and smoking should be discouraged during the clean-up operation. However, if persons do eat, they should wash their hands and face vigorously with soap and fresh water, then dry with clean paper towels prior to eating. If sufficient clean water is not available at the site for hands and face washing, then the persons should go to a facility where soap and fresh water are available so they can properly wash before eating.

Practices after River Clean-Up

- ✿ When you have finished for the day, you should remove any disposable apparel and place these items in a plastic trash bag for disposal. Soiled clothing which is removed at the site is to be taken home should be transported in a plastic bag for later washing.
- ✿ Boots and shoes should be washed with dish washing soap and a brush, and then rinsed with clean water. Hands and face will again need to be washed and dried.
- ✿ You should go directly home and wash all the apparel you have worn during the clean-up in the washing machine's hot cycle. Then the articles should be dried in the dryer's hot cycle. You should take a shower or bath using plenty of soap and hot water.
- ✿ If you experience any symptoms of illness, you should discuss these with a physician as soon as possible and mention that you were working at the Rouge River.