



[Home \(/\)](#) > **Water safety around flood waters**

# Water safety around flood waters

The extreme wet weather conditions since late February 2022 have had a significant impact on the water quality and safety of our rivers and beaches. Debris seen in flood waters and washed up on shorelines includes destroyed caravans, cars, shipping containers, mattresses, fridges, gas bottles and chemical drums. Silt, debris and rubbish has been deposited by flood waters in low lying areas such as parks and carparks. And, an extremely large amount of debris is floating and submerged in all waterways.

## The clean-up

The EPA has engaged contractors to conduct shoreline and river clean up. Emergency Operation Centres (Councils), Public Works Advisory and Transport for NSW – Maritime will identify priorities areas for clean-up. The EPA will also use aerial surveys to identify debris.

The community can assist to prioritise areas for clean up by contacting the Environment Line on 131 555 or by email at [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au) (<mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au>), regarding pollution caused by the floods on their local rivers and beaches.

This extensive clean-up will take time and we encourage the community to be patient during the process.

## Safety

The community is encouraged to avoid beaches and waterways if they are impacted by pollutants.

The heavy rain and flood waters will have washed pollutants from our streets, including rubbish, bird and dog faeces, cigarette butts, leaf litter and oil into the stormwater system. Heavy rainfall can also trigger discharges from wastewater systems.

Hazardous materials and unidentified items on beaches should not be handled.

If you are handling waste and debris, always wear gloves to avoid direct contact with the skin, and to protect yourself from injury while using tools and implements.

Wear protective footwear that covers your skin adequately to avoid direct contact with flood waste and debris

If you see a potential incident with serious environmental impacts please contact the Environment Line immediately on 131 555 or by email at [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au) (<mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au>).

# Swimming in beaches and waterways

Swimming in waters affected by stormwater can expose swimmers to a number of dangers, including pathogens which can make you sick, and hidden debris below the surface which you could collide with or become snagged under the water.

[Beachwatch](https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/beaches/beachwatch-water-quality-program) (<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/beaches/beachwatch-water-quality-program>) issues daily reports for most beaches in the Hunter, Central Coast, Sydney and Illawarra regions. The key advice for swimmers across coastal NSW is to use your common sense. If you can see signs of pollution in the water, like discoloured water or debris floating on the surface, don't jump in.

Never swim in floodwater and avoid swimming near stormwater drains.

If you're unsure about the safety of swimming at your local beach or swimming spot, speak to the lifeguards on duty or give local council a call.

If you encounter any significant pollution or debris in the water please contact Environment Line on 131 555 or by email at [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au) (<mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au>).

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Please consider the environment before printing.