

# Keeping an IPAC practitioner on retainer in the event of water intrusion

## NHMSFAP Update

The safe reopening of a non-hospital facility after a flood or significant water intrusion event (greater than 32 ft<sup>2</sup>) requires the specialized expertise of a health-care infection prevention and control (IPAC) practitioner. As water intrusion events are unpredictable and qualified IPAC practitioners are a scarce resource, non-hospital facilities should be prepared by having a qualified IPAC practitioner on retainer to call upon in the event of a water intrusion.

IPAC practitioners provide direction and expertise for the containment, clean-up and disinfection of the area(s) affected by a water intrusion, decisions regarding the disposal or reprocessing of all clean and sterile supplies, the assessment and reassessment of the affected areas for moisture, mold and spores, and post-remediation sign-off prior to the recommencement of health-care services.

More specifically, an IPAC practitioner thoroughly assesses the extent of the water damage, including the type of water (clean, gray or black water) and identifies all affected areas and equipment. They provide direction to the restoration/construction company for the removal of water, the required

preventative measures based on an infection control risk assessment, hoarding of the area(s) and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system, as appropriate, the assessment and reassessment of structural materials for residual moisture, and air quality testing for bioaerosols.

Health-care facilities, old or new, are vulnerable to water intrusion events. Non-hospital facilities which are not located on the top floor of a building are particularly vulnerable to the risk of water intrusion and damage arising from units or infrastructure above the facility.

In the event of a water intrusion event and following the safe closing of any procedure in progress, the medical director must immediately notify the NHMSFAP and cease operations until the facility has been inspected and approval by the NHMSFAP Committee to resume operations has been granted.