

Flood Clean Up Instructions

BEFORE DOING ANYTHING... Does the outside inspection show the structure is safe? Check for structural damage to see if it is safe to enter the building. Watch for electrical shorts and live wires. Electrical safety is most important in floods. Make sure that electrical service is **DISCONNECTED** and **CANNOT** be turned on before entering any structure. Turn off any outside gas lines at the tank or meter, and let the building air out for several minutes to remove gas fumes.

Steps Towards Clean Up

- See that everyone is out of danger of new flood crests, falling buildings, fire or other hazards.
- Contact your insurance agent immediately. Give your name, address and a phone number where you can be reached.
- Take pictures of the damage before beginning clean up.
- Keep accurate records. List all clean-up and repair bills, flood-related living expenses and actual losses, such as furniture, appliances, clothing, etc
- Adjuster will assess damage to house. Owner should sign proof-of-loss statement. Additional damages can be added when found.
If you have a question or problem with your insurance carrier, contact the Missouri Department of Insurance: 1-800-726-7390.

Information & Referrals

- Contact local, state and federal offices for help and answers to specific clean-up questions.
- Your University Outreach and Extension center can help with food and water safety, cleanup and restoration questions or referrals.
- ParentLink offers parents and others with resources to help children cope: 1-800-552-8522

Electrical Systems

- Be sure utilities are disconnected before entering the building for the first time.
- Disconnect main switch and all circuits. If the main switch is located in the basement, be sure all flood water is pumped out **BEFORE** attempting any work on electrical systems.
- Remove covers and clean all outlets and fuse or multi-breaker boxes.
- Dry contacts and spray with cleaner/lubricant.
- Have an electrician check for ground faults and other unsafe conditions and equipment before reconnecting systems. Equipment and wiring that appears to be safe soon after flooding may fail prematurely and cause a fire or shock hazard. Replacement is often the best option. Circuit breakers that have been submerged should be replaced.

Food & Water Sanitation

Until your local water utility or county health department declares your water source safe, purify all water, not only for drinking and cooking, but also for washing any part of the body.

To sterilize water, use one of these methods:

- Boil vigorously for 3 minutes.
- Add unscented chlorine laundry bleach (1/2 teaspoon per 2 ½ gallons of water).
- Add tincture of iodine (12 drops per gallon of water).

Food:

- Discard all foods, including garden produce, that have come in contact with flood waters.
- Only foods sealed in airtight metal cans that are not bulging or damaged and have been properly sanitized can be saved.
- Contact your local University Outreach and Extension center for proper disposal and decontamination guidelines.

Floor Coverings**Carpets and Rugs**

Carpets and rugs may be cleaned best by professionals.

To clean them yourself, pull up water-logged carpets, rugs and pads and dry outside on a clean, flat surface, such as a concrete driveway. If the rug is placed face down, stains will wick to the back instead of to the face yarns.

Hose off and, if badly soiled, add detergent. Work detergent into carpet with broom and rinse well. Remove as much water as possible quickly using steam, fans or water-extraction equipment. Take care to avoid electrical shock.

To discourage mildew and odors, rinse with a solution of 2 tablespoons of chlorine bleach per gallon of water. If the carpet is wool, do NOT add bleach.

Dry carpet and floor thoroughly before carpet is replaced. If carpet is put down wet, it may mildew. Carpet and backing may shrink.

Discard all padding.

Subfloors

Layers of submerged plywood subfloors may separate. Sections that separate must be replaced to keep floor covering from buckling. When floor coverings are removed, allow subflooring to dry thoroughly (it may take several months). Check for warping before installing new flooring.

Wood floors:

- Carefully remove a board every few feet to reduce buckling caused by swelling. Consult a carpenter about removal techniques for tongue-and-groove boards.
- Clean and dry floor thoroughly (may take several weeks or months) before replacing boards and attempting repairs.

Tile and sheet-vinyl floors:

- If submerged subfloor is wood, floor covering probably should be removed so subflooring can be replaced. If floor has not been soaked, loose tiles may be recemented after floor is thoroughly dry.
- If subflooring is concrete, removing floor covering will hasten drying of slab. Removal may not be necessary if it would ruin an otherwise unharmed material.
- If water has seeped under loose sections of sheet flooring, remove entire sheet.
- Contact a reputable dealer to find out what solvent and technique will loosen the adhesive with the least damage to the floor. Ease of removal depends on the type of material and adhesive.

Furniture

Take furniture outdoors to clean. Hose or brush off mud. All parts (drawers, doors, etc.) should be removed. Remove or cut hole in back to push out stuck drawers and doors.

Dry slowly out of direct sunlight. (hot sunlight will warp furniture.) It may take several weeks to several months to dry.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Wash exposed skin parts (hands, feet, etc.) frequently in purified water. Wear rubber gloves for extra protection against contamination. As flood waters recede, use a disinfectant to clean walls and woodwork from top to bottom. A 3-gallon garden sprayer works well. One cup of household chlorine bleach per gallon of water can be used as a disinfectant. Scrub with a brush to help remove mud and silt. Rinse with clean water. Dry thoroughly. If utilities are on, use heater, fan or air conditioner to speed drying.

Household Appliances

Submerged appliances must be cleaned and dried before starting.

With electricity or fuel turned off, unplug and open as much as possible to rinse or wipe clean and let dry. Tilt to drain and aid quick drying. Three days to a week is necessary for drying.

Appliance repair person should check before reconnecting. Most motorized appliances can be saved.

Flood-Damaged Walls

- Remove water from structure as rapidly as possible.
- Remove interior surface of insulated walls to point above water height.
- Remove and discard wet insulation.
- Treat interior wall studs and plates with disinfectant to prevent growth of decay-causing organisms.
- Provide ventilation by opening windows and doors and using fans.
- Leave walls open for up to four weeks or until they have thoroughly dried.
- Select replacement materials that will withstand future floods.
- Delay permanent repairs until buildings are thoroughly dry (may be several weeks).
- Control mildew in the weeks and months that follow flood.

Mildew Prevention

- If an air conditioner is available, use it to remove moisture.
- In homes that are not air-conditioned, open as many windows as possible. Use fans to circulate air.
- Turn on electric lights in closets, and leave doors open to dry.
- Let lights stay on as long as dampness or high humidity is present to help dry and prevent mildew growth.

Removing Mildew From Household Articles

- Brush off mold and mildew growth outdoors to prevent scattering of spores in the house.
- Run a vacuum cleaner attachment over the area to draw out more of the mold. Discard vacuum bag immediately.
- Sponge any remaining mildew with thick suds. Wipe with a clean, barely damp cloth.

- Wipe mildew-stained area with cloth dampened with diluted alcohol: 1 cup rubbing (denatured) alcohol to 1 cup of water and dry thoroughly.
- Spray with fungicide or other commercial disinfectant.
- Dry article thoroughly.

Source: University of Missouri Extension, Disaster Resources Handbook, 2004