

Flood Clean-Up Instructions



First steps

- Follow instructions of emergency personnel as to when it is safe to return.
- Contact your insurance agent. Give your name, address and a phone number where you can be reached. Follow your insurance agent's direction about when to begin clean up.
- Take pictures of the damage before beginning clean up.
- Keep 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.

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.
- This work is best done by an electrician.
- Have an electrician check for 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 under water should be replaced.

Cleaning up after the flood

- Mold is common after the flood.
- Your home should be washed to prevent health problems.
- In most cases household cleaning products will do the job.
- Read the label to see how much to use.
- Tackle one room at a time. The two-bucket approach is best. One bucket for cleaner, one for rinse.

Subfloors

Plywood subfloors may separate when flooded. Sections that separate must be replaced to keep floor from warping. When floor coverings (carpets, rugs, etc.) are removed, allow subflooring to dry (it may take several months) 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 (it may take several weeks or months) before replacing boards and attempting repairs.

Tile and sheet-vinyl floors:

- If subfloor is wood, tile or sheet vinyl, it should be removed so wood can be replaced. If floor has not been soaked, loose tiles may be re-cemented after floor is dry.
- If subfloor is concrete, removing tile or sheet vinyl will speed drying of the concrete floor. If the tile or sheet vinyl is not damaged, you may allow the floor to dry on its own.
- If water has gotten under loose areas of the sheet flooring, remove the entire sheet.
- Ask a flooring dealer what will loosen the adhesive with the least damage to the floor.

Carpets and rugs

- Carpets and rugs are best cleaned by professionals.
- To clean them yourself, pull up water-logged carpets. Discard all padding. Rugs and pads should be dried outside on a clean, flat surface, such as a concrete driveway. Place face down so 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 prevent mildew and odors, rinse with a solution of two tablespoons of chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- Dry carpet and floor thoroughly before carpet is replaced. If carpet is put down wet, it may mildew. Carpet and backing may shrink.

Furniture

- Take furniture outdoors to clean.
- Hose or brush off mud.
- All parts (drawers, doors, etc.) should be removed.
- Dry slowly out of direct sunlight (hot sunlight will warp furniture). It may take several weeks to fully dry.

Household appliances

- Appliances that have been under water must be cleaned and dried before starting.
- All electricity or gas must be turned off.
- Open as much as possible to rinse or wipe clean.
- Let dry. Three days to a week is necessary for drying.
- Check with an appliance person before reconnecting. Most appliances can be saved.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Wash (hands, feet, etc.) frequently in purified or disinfected water.
- Wear rubber gloves for extra protection against contamination. If you have cuts or scratches on your skin you must wear rubber gloves.
- As flood waters go down, use a disinfectant to clean walls and woodwork. A garden sprayer works well, spraying from top to bottom.
- Scrub with a brush to help remove mud and silt.
- Rinse with clean water and dry. If electricity is on, use heater, fan or air conditioner to speed drying.

Flood-damaged walls

- Remove water from home/business as soon as possible.
- Remove inside of walls to point above water height.
- Remove and discard wet insulation.
- Treat interior wall studs and plates with household bleach solution to prevent mold.
- Open windows and doors and use fans to allow to dry.
- Leave walls open for four weeks or until they have dried.

Clothing and linens

- Even if your washing machine did not get wet, do not use it until you know that the water is safe enough to drink and that your sewer line works.
- Before you wash clothes in the washing machine, run the machine through one full cycle, using hot water and a laundry detergent with one cup of bleach.
- Take clothes and linens outdoors and shake out dried mud or dirt before you wash them.
- Check the labels on clothes and linens. Wash them in detergent, household bleach and warm water if possible. You can buy pine oil cleaners at the grocery store to sanitize fabrics that cannot be bleached. If the label says “Dry Clean Only,” shake out loose dirt and take the item to a professional cleaner.

Information and 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.