Floor Cleanup and Renovation

Not all warped wood flooring can be repaired. The extent of damage depends partly on the kind of material used in the floor. Different woods react differently to dampness or flooding.

**Plywood**

Many homes have plywood subfloors. Plywood usually separates (delaminates) when exposed to excessive moisture. This makes the covering material (carpet, sheet-flooring, or tile) buckle. Consult a reliable contractor for this work.

A small section of the subfloor that has separated can be replaced with new plywood. If the entire floor has delaminated, either remove the entire subfloor and replace it or nail new plywood over the old. Thoroughly dry the subfloor before recovering it with carpet or new flooring.

**Hardwood**

Badly warped hardwood floors usually cannot be repaired. If the floor is clearly unrepairable, take it up and discard it. Allow subflooring to dry for several months before installing another floor over it.

Here’s how to repair slightly warped hardwood floors:

1. Clean and dry the floor completely before attempting any repairs. This may take weeks or even months.

2. If the floor is still warped in dried places, remove strips next to the bulges and plane them on their edges. This gives more space for the warped boards to flatten out in time. (If boards are tongue and groove, consult a carpenter about the special techniques necessary for this work.)

3. You may be able to draw some buckled flooring into place by nailing the bulged spots. Some humps may be removed by planing or sanding. Heavily planed or sanded floors, though unsuitable to be used uncovered, can serve as a base for new flooring or for carpet or resilient floor covering.

**Pine**

Warped wide pine board flooring often flattens out after it has thoroughly dried. Clean the floor and let it dry for several months. Using the furnace as much as possible during the drying time speeds up the process. Do not try to repair the floor until it is dry. If any boards are still slightly warped when dry, use the same technique as for warped hardwood floors.

When laying a new floor or subfloor, remove baseboards and moldings. The finished floor should be the same level as the original floor, if possible. If floor level changes, doors must be refitted to the new level. Consult a carpenter before trying this.

**Tile, Linoleum, and Vinyl Floor Coverings**

**Subfloor**

Water coming up from below causes the most damage to subfloor material. If a linoleum or vinyl floor covering is not underwater for many days, the floor covering may partially protect the subfloor material. Long submersion, however, loosens adhesives and warps subflooring. If a plywood or hardwood subfloor is wet, you should remove the linoleum or vinyl and replace the subfloor material.

**Loosened Floor Coverings**

Some floor coverings may crack or break when you try to loosen the adhesive. Contact a reputable dealer to find out what solvent loosens adhesives with the least damage to
linoleum or vinyl. Heating may make the covering less brittle. How easily the covering can be lifted depends on the material and adhesive. If the adhesive is waterproof, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to remove the floor covering without considerable damage.

 Tiles
If the floor has not been badly soaked, you may not need to replace the subfloor. It is possible to re-cement loosened tiles of any type. Thoroughly dry the floor before trying to re-cement. Blisters may be left in the linoleum tiles after warped wooden flooring has dried. Carefully puncture each blister with a nail. With a hand syringe, force diluted linoleum paste through the hold, and weigh down the linoleum with bricks.

 Sheet Linoleum or Vinyl
Water may have seeped under a loose section of vinyl or sheet linoleum. Carefully remove the entire sheet. Let the floor dry thoroughly before trying to re-cement the linoleum. Thorough drying may take as long as 6 weeks or more. Use a new sheet of lining felt before re-cementing the floor covering.

 Cleaning Flooded Floors and Woodwork
1. Shovel out the worst of the mud and silt before it dries. Use a hose if necessary.

2. Before the house has dried out, scrub floors and woodwork with a stiff brush, plenty of water, a detergent, and a disinfectant. Remove mud and silt from corners, cracks, and crevices.

3. Water may have accumulated in partitions and exterior walls. Drain these areas by removing baseboards and drilling holes between studs a few inches above the floor. You may need to remove sections of the wallboard or plaster so that wall stud and the interior can dry thoroughly. This process can take months.

4. Give floors a final thorough washing with a nonsudsing cleaning product.

 Removing Surface Mildew
1. Heat the room to 50 to 60° F to help dry mildewed wood.

2. Scrub mildewed floors and woodwork with a mild alkaline solution such as washing soda or nonphosphate detergent (4 to 6 tablespoons to 1 gallon of water). You may also use a cloth dipped in a mixture of borax dissolved in hot water.

3. Rinse with clear water.

4. Wipe clean floors dry with old towels.

5. Allow wood to dry thoroughly.

6. Apply a mildew-resistant paint after woodwork has thoroughly dried.

7. Dry thoroughly before refinishing.

 Refinishing
You may prefer to have floors professionally refinished. If you decide to do the work yourself, follow these steps:

1. Let floors and subfloors are thoroughly dry.

2. Sand the surface until it is clean and smooth. Heavily planed floors may never look good again, but they can serve as a base for carpeting, tile, or sheet flooring.

3. If floor is oak, apply a filler then two coats of a penetrating floor seal or spar varnish. Sand between coats.

4. Apply varnish, following directions on can.

5. Treat fir flooring in the same way, but omit the filler.