Flood-Damaged Carpets and Rugs

When you have flood-damaged carpeting and rugs, your options depend on the source of flooding. If sewage-contaminated floodwater has covered your carpeting, you will need to discard it for health safety reasons. You can assume the water and the carpet contain infectious organisms. If basement seepage or lawn runoff has covered your carpeting, it can be dried and cleaned. Throw rugs can usually be saved.

When to Discard, Clean, or Call a Professional

- If wall-to-wall carpeting, large area rugs, and any rug with foam backing are flooded with contaminated water, discard the item. Except for valuable rugs, the time and expense of professional cleaning generally is not worth the effort or the health risk.
- If you are determined to salvage carpeting soaked with contaminated water, consult a professional cleaning company that services carpets at its own cleaning and drying facilities. A steam cleaning (hot water extraction) method is preferable.
  - You can save wall-to-wall carpeting soaked by clean rainwater. Have it professionally cleaned or clean it using the directions below.
  - You can usually clean throw rugs well enough in a washing machine.

Cleaning Rain-Soaked Carpets

Cleaning carpeting indoors is not a good idea in summer, because you are adding more moisture to an already wet area. If the carpeting is installed with tack strips, remove it and have it cleaned and reinstalled. Padding is nearly impossible to clean, so replace it. If you can’t remove the carpeting, dry it as quickly as possible to lesson growth of mildew. If possible, use a wet/dry vacuum system. A dehumidifier can help remove moisture from the air. Keep windows closed when using a dehumidifier.

1. When the carpet is thoroughly dry, vacuum it.
2. Shampoo and repeat the drying process. Most modern carpeting is made of nylon and should not be treated with bleach.
3. Vacuum again.

Follow these instructions to reduce a musty smell:

1. Sprinkle baking soda over the carpet, working it in with a broom or sponge mop.
2. Leave the baking soda in the carpet overnight.
3. Vacuum the baking soda out. Vacuum twice, moving back and forth in a different direction the second time.