

TIMELY INFORMATION

Flood Recovery

Flood Recovery: Home

Salvaging Flood-Damaged Furniture

Before you start salvaging flood-damaged furniture, decide which pieces are worth restoring. Such decisions should be based on the extent of the damage, cost of the article, sentimental value and cost of restoration. Remember to consider each piece individually.

Antiques are probably worth the time, effort and expense of restoration. Solid wood furniture can usually be restored unless the damage is severe. Wood veneered furniture is usually not worth the cost and effort of repair unless it is of sentimental value Upholstered furniture may be salvageable, depending upon its general condition It will probably need new padding and fabric

Source: Georgia Aycock, former Extension resource management specialist

Cleaning Clothes After a Flood

When clothes have been soaked by flooding, simply drying them is not enough. The flood water may have been contaminated with sewage waste. For safety's sake, the clothes must be disinfected to kill harmful bacteria.

Liquid chlorine bleach is the most accessible, cheapest and easiest disinfectant to use in the home. However, chlorine bleach cannot be used on some garments. Dry cleaning is also effective.

When cleaning flood-damaged clothes, separate wet items as soon as possible to keep colors from running together. Sort out clothing that should be dry-cleaned. Items to be dry-cleaned should be air-dried and taken to a cleaner as soon as possible. When drying items you suspect may have been in sewage-contaminated water, wear plastic gloves.

Dry clothes at room temperature. Once dry, shake and brush to remove as much soil as possible.

Rinse washable items several times in cold water. If badly soiled, soak overnight in cold water and detergent. Wring out and air dry if you're unable to machine wash.

Machine wash clothes as soon as possible. Use detergent and a disinfectant. Use highest water level possible, don't overcrowd washer and use hottest water temperature suitable for the garments. Wash for longest cycle available. Dry in a dryer at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric.

If an item is still stained after washing, rewash before drying as drying may make some stains more difficult to remove.

Source: Georgia Aycock, former Extension resource management specialist

Clearing Debris From Flood Area

Your city government may or may not clean up your property after a flood. You may be responsible for clearing debris from your own property! Wear protective clothing on legs, arms, feet and hands while cleaning up debris.

After a severe storm, priorities for clearing debris from land should be determined by land use and value, equipment availability and type of debris. To find out how you can properly deal with your flood debris, call your county Extension office.

Source: Genta Speakman, former Extension home environment specialist

Watch for Snakes and Rodents After Floods

Following a flood, snakes and rodents are often forced into places they are not usually found. Carry a solid club and a flashlight when looking for rats and snakes. Know how to identify poisonous snakes common to your area. And be alert for snakes in unusual places like driftwood, stalled cars and piles of debris. For rats, check mattresses, furniture, closets, attics and basements. Be extremely careful when approaching rats. A starving rat can be dangerous.

Source: Genta Speakman, former Extension home environment specialist

How to Make Temporary Structural Repairs

There's more to worry about than broken windows and leaking roofs when inspecting a house for flood damage. You should make sure there's no live power in or around a house. Make doubly sure that the main breaker at the service entrance is off. If you're in doubt, wait for the power company to come check it out.

Check for structural damage to make sure the building is not in danger of collapsing. Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter or tank and let the house air for several minutes to remove foul odors or escaping gas. If you must enter at night, carry a battery-operated flashlight. Don't use a flame as a light source. Do not smoke.

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Shovel out mud while it's still moist to give walls and floors a chance to dry. Once plastered walls have dried, brush off loose dirt. Wash with mild soap and rinse with clean water; always start at the bottom and work up. Ceilings should be done last. It's also important to clean out heating and plumbing systems.

Flooded basements should be drained and cleaned as soon as possible. However, structural damage can occur by pumping out the water too quickly. After the floodwater around your property has subsided, begin draining the basement in stages, about one-third of the water volume each day.

If the building has shifted or the floors have settled badly, it may be necessary to install temporary bracing until extensive work can be done.

To prevent flooded wooden floors from buckling and warping further, drive nails where the floor tends to lift or bulge.

Source: Genta Speakman, former Extension home environment specialist

Cleaning Carpet and Floors

Cleaning water-soaked carpets and floors is a difficult chore in itself, but in the aftermath of a flood, contamination by mud, silt, sewage and mildew can compound the problem. Begin cleanup as soon as possible.

Pull up carpets and rugs and drape them outdoors. Hose carpets down. Work a low-sudsing, disinfectant carpet-cleaning product deep into soiled spots with a broom.

To discourage mildew and odors, rinse with a solution of two tablespoons of bleach to one gallon of water. **Don't use this solution on wool carpets.**

Dry carpet and floor thoroughly before replacing carpet to avoid future mildew problems and shrinkage. Use fans, vacuum cleaners and dehumidifiers to speed the drying.

Waffle-weave and foam or rubber-type pads may be reused.

Sections of subfloors that separate must be replaced to avoid buckling. When floor coverings are removed, allow subfloors to dry thoroughly, even though it may take several months.

In wood floors, remove a board every few feet to reduce buckling caused by swelling. Ask a carpenter for tips on removing tongue-and-groove boards. Clean and dry floor thoroughly before attempting repairs.

In vinyl floors with wood sub-flooring, the floor covering should be removed so that the sub-flooring can be replaced. With concrete floors, removal isn't necessary except to hasten drying of the slab.

Source: Georgia Aycock, former Extension resource management specialist

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Getting Rid of Flood Odor

To get rid of the stench that often accompanies flooding, scrub all interior surfaces that were in contact with flood waters. Use hot sudsy water followed by a rinse solution of two tablespoons of liquid laundry bleach to a gallon of water, or use a household disinfectant, following manufacturer's directions. Repeat the scrubbing and rinsing if necessary until odor is gone.

Source: Georgia Aycock, former Extension resource management specialist

Floods and Contaminated Foods

Contaminated food may be a problem following any storm involving flooding. Flood waters may carry silt, raw sewage, oil or chemical wastes. Filth and disease bacteria in flood water will contaminate food, making it unsafe to eat.

Inspect any food left in the house after a flood. Flood water may have covered it, dripped on it or seeped into it. USDA is recommending that all foods exposed to flood water be thrown away. For more information, call your county Extension office.

Source: Jean Weese, Extension nutrition and food scientist

Home-Canned Foods and Floods

You should throw away ALL home-canned foods that were covered by flood waters! The empty jars and rings need to be sterilized before you use them for canning again. Wash them in soapy water and cover completely with a chlorine solution of household bleach. Use one tablespoon per gallon of water. Rinse well in clear water and cover with water and boil vigorously for ten minutes. The flat lid should always be discarded.

Source: Jean Weese, Extension nutrition and food scientist

Flooded Buildings

When entering flood-damaged buildings, use flashlights only, not matches, torches, or any open flame. If you are not qualified to judge the stability of a foundation, you or your entire community could hire a contractor to make this inspection. Wash out mud, dirt and debris as soon as possible. Wooden floors will dry out slowly, but don't build fires to speed up their drying. When cleaning out your basement, turn off the electricity at the meter, turn off gas or fuel service valves, and open doors and windows to get fresh air into the basement.

Source: Genta Speakman, former Extension home environment specialist

Restoring Electricity After Floods

When checking your electrical system after a flood, wear rubber gloves and rubber-soled boots for work with all electrical circuits.

Disconnect the main electrical power switch and any other switches controlling pumps or outbuildings. If your main switch is in the basement, make sure all water has been pumped out before you attempt any work on the system.

If flood water covered your first floor, electrical outlets and switches are probably wet and they must be dried before service can be restored. Use extreme caution in cleaning mud and dirt from the main entrance box. Finally, check the system for electrical shorts. Check with an electrician or your county Extension office for more information.

Source: Genta Speakman, former Extension home environment specialist