

Cleaning Up After a Flood

I. Beware of Hazards

A. Hazards List

- Structural Collapse; Electrical (wires, circuit boxes down or under water); Gas leak: DO NOT ENTER IF THESE ARE NOT SECURED.
- Sewage/Manure in water; Hazmat (cleaning fluids); Animals; Sharps (nails, glass, especially under water/mud).

B. Safety Tips

- **NEVER ASSUME THAT WATER-DAMAGED STRUCTURES ARE SAFE. LEAVE IF SHIFTING OR UNUSUAL NOISES OCCUR.**
- NEVER HANDLE A DOWNED POWER LINE.
- Work in pairs or groups and take short breaks.
- Immediately clean open wounds with soap & water. Cuts beyond minor scratches need medical attention.
- Avoid lifting more than 50 pounds.
- Work during the cooler hours of the day.
- Avoid heat stroke by wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and drinking fluids every 15-20 minutes.

C. Protective Clothing

- Mold Respirator (N-95; tightly fitted- seal should not be compromised by facial hair; dusk mask may not be enough)
- Gloves (rubber to mid-arm for water/waste biohazard, work gloves for sharps)
- Goggles (better without vent holes)
- Boots/Soles (for water and sharps)
- Outerwear (rubber waders or disposable splash protection)

2. Remove Furniture, Debris, and Sanitize

- Remove and discard everything porous/absorbent that was touched by flood water: upholstered furniture, carpet, false ceiling panels, and anything with mold. Some items (Non-porous) can be sanitized by bleach/sunlight or preserved by specialists. Dry these items thoroughly outdoors; hours of sunlight helps disinfect after bleaching.
- Scoop out mud and debris; dump in approved facility or down slope from houses.
- Sanitize all surfaces - floors, walls, doors/knobs, cabinets/counters with 10% bleach or 1% chlorinated lime, let dry.
- Floodwater in basement:
 - disinfect standing water with bleach (4-8 cups bleach per bath tubful or barrel of flood water)
 - pump out but not lower than groundwater level outside house (to avoid collapsing walls)
 - remove mud and waterlogged material
 - sanitize surfaces
 - open windows or use furnace to help dry

3. Mold and Drywall Removal

- EPA suggests hiring a professional or following their commercial mold guidance if more than 10 sq ft of mold.
- Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible. Dry all items completely.
- Remove wet sheetrock and insulation at least 6 inches above the water line (or more) if it appears the sheetrock has absorbed water higher up. Remove in 4'x8' sections for ease of installing new sheets. Disinfect exposed wetted areas behind wall.
- Heat ducts/vents could have mold in them; do not run system until fairly sure it does not contain mold; call professional if necessary.
- If electrical outlets are wet, do not put up new walls until an electrical inspection is done. Electrical outlets that have gotten wet will have to be replaced.
- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water and dry completely.
- Absorbent or porous materials, such as drywall, ceiling tiles and carpet, should be thrown away if they become moldy or have been in contact with flood water.
- Avoid exposing yourself or others to mold.
- Do not paint or caulk moldy surfaces. Clean up the mold and dry the surfaces before painting.