



TIPS FOR SAFE FLOOD CLEANUP

DEP, county and state emergency management agencies and the American Red Cross recommend that residents whose homes have been affected by flood waters:

- Be careful when entering a flood-damaged building. Loose, wet ceiling plaster is heavy and dangerous, so knock down hanging plaster before moving around. Watch for holes in the floor and loose boards with exposed nails.
- Once inside, turn off the gas and electricity. Wear rubber-soled shoes or boots and rubber gloves and turn off the main switch using a piece of rubber, plastic or dry wood while standing on a dry board to avoid electrocution.
- Do not pump the basement until water has gone down. Pumping a water-filled basement could result collapsed walls.
- Never use a gas-powered pump or generator in an enclosed area; carbon monoxide fumes could overcome you.
- Test plumbing and basement drains by pouring a bucket of water in them. If the water does not run out, remove the clean-out plug from the trap and rake out the mud with a wire.
- Basement odors, although unpleasant, are usually harmless. If ventilation does not remove them, sprinkle bleaching powder (chloride of lime) on the floor. This powder is an effective disinfectant.
- Do not rush to move back into your home. Before a house is habitable, it must be dried and thoroughly cleaned, since flood waters pick up sewage and chemicals as they travel.
- Open doors and windows to ventilate and dry the inside, and wait until all floors, ceilings, walls and furnishings are dry and free of mold and mildew before trying to repair or salvage them.
- Everything that flood water has touched should be disinfected. Scrub down walls and any other smooth, hard surfaces with a solution made of clean water and two-percent chlorine bleach. Two to three capfuls of chlorine bleach to a bucket of water are recommended. Wear gloves when disinfecting surfaces.
- Do not attempt to repair floors until they are fully dry. Dry wood floors as soon as possible by opening all doors and windows, which should prevent them from shrinking and deforming. Once dry, buckled floors may be drawn back into place with nails, and planing and sanding may remove humps.
- Remove drawers and clean wood furniture. Be sure to dry furniture slowly indoors to prevent the sun from warping it.
- If possible, simply air-dry family treasures such as books, photographs or paintings. If wet books, documents, photographs or textiles cannot be air-dried within 48 hours, freeze them if you have a freezer that is large enough. If not, keep them as cool as possible until air-drying is possible.
- Washers, dryers and furnaces can usually be cleaned and tested by qualified electricians. Replacing expensive appliances after a flood is usually not necessary.
- Mattresses, carpets and rugs should be discarded. In most cases, mattresses and rugs become so saturated with contaminated material that cleaning attempts are futile.
- Take care to protect open scratches or wounds from coming in contact with the contaminated water. Raw sewage and other bacteria in the flood waters can cause infections. Wounds should be cleaned thoroughly with soap and water, and a tetanus shot may be needed.
- Discard and food that comes in contact with flood waters. Any beverage bottles with twist caps that were under the water should also be thrown out. Dishes and eating and cooking utensils should be thoroughly cleaned with the water and chlorine bleach solution before use.
- Check refrigerated or frozen foods carefully in power outages occur. Any frozen foods that have partially or completely defrosted should be used immediately or discarded. Perishable foods kept in a refrigerator that has been off for more than four hours or has warmed to more than 45 degrees Fahrenheit should be discarded.
- Bring drinking water to a rolling boil for at least one minute if you suspect it has been contaminated. Residents are urged to boil water if it is unusually cloudy or has an unusual odor.

For more information, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us.