

FLOODED HOME; GENERAL TIPS

My house has been flooded. What do I need to know before I reenter?

If you are preparing to enter your home after it has been flooded, make sure you take the following precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Stay away from damaged houses or buildings that have not been examined by an inspector.
- Always wear hard hats, goggles, heavy work gloves and watertight boots when you enter flooded buildings for cleanup work.
- Turn off the main power from a dry location if you have standing water in your home.
- If you can only turn off the main power by entering your home where there is standing water, call an electrician to turn it off and ask them to check the house's electrical system before turning the power on again.
- If your home has been closed up for several days because of the flood, open doors and windows to let the air out (for at least 30 minutes) before you spend any long periods of time working inside.
- Never turn power on or use any electric devices if you are standing in water.

For more detailed information on reentering the home after a flood, follow this link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/reenter.html>

DRYING HOME; DRY OUT

How can I dry out my home after a flood before I can begin cleaning?

- Open doors and windows to air out the house.
- Use dehumidifiers to remove excess moisture and place fans at windows or doors to blow the air outward and avoid spreading mold.
- If you have power in your home and it is safe to turn it on, you can use a "wet-dry" shop vacuum to remove standing water.
- Make sure to wear rubber boots while working with equipment in wet areas.
- Make sure you check your home's heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) system. An HVAC professional should check it and clean up mold buildup before the system is turned on.

CLEANUP; CLEANING UP;

How can I prepare to clean up my house after it has been flooded?

Cleaning up your house after a flood requires certain necessary safety measures.

- Turn off power to the house before any cleanup work is attempted inside.
- Keep children and pets away from any flooded or damaged areas inside or outside the house.
- Wear long pants, a long-sleeved high water boots shirt during all cleanup activities.
- Use gloves so that you don't touch mold with your hands.
- Use a respirator (N95) so that you do not breathe in any mold spores.
- Use goggles that do not have any holes in them so that mold doesn't get into your eyes.
- If something is wet with flood water and cannot be cleaned, throw it away.

- If something is moldy and cannot be cleaned and disinfected, throw it away. For example, mattresses, pillows, carpets, rugs, upholstered furniture, stuffed animals or toys, books, wallpaper and paper products, personal hygiene items and cosmetics.
- Remove drywall and any insulation that has been contaminated with flood water (which may contain sewage).
- Clean and disinfect all hard surfaces using hot water and a cleaner that kills germs or a laundry or dish detergent. For example, floors, concrete, molding, wood/metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks and plumbing fixtures.
- Do not mix cleaning products together or add bleach to other chemicals.
- Clean your heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) system. An HVAC professional should check it and clean up mold buildup before the system is turned on.
- Wash all contaminated clothes and linens, including clothes worn during cleanup, in hot water and detergent.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after cleanup.
- Disinfect water for personal hygiene (1/3 teaspoon of household bleach in 1 gallon of water).

Detailed guidelines on cleaning up after a flood are available here:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/flood_booklet_en.pdf

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.html>

More information on safe cleanup and what hazards to prepare for after a disaster are available here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html>

The Houston Health Department has more tips on cleaning and sanitizing homes:

<http://mailchi.mp/houstontx/houston-health-department-urges-health-precautions-to-citizens-affected-by-harvey?e=519f330dcc>

MOLD; CLEANING; CLEANUP; DISINFECTING

What is mold and how can I properly get rid of it after a flood?

Mold are microorganisms that grow in warm, damp and humid conditions and spread by making spores. Mold can be found indoors and outdoors and have potentially hazardous health effects. People with allergies, asthma or other respiratory conditions are particularly susceptible to mold.

The CDC recommends the following for mold cleanup:

- Open all doors and windows when you are working so you can keep the space ventilated.
- Use protective equipment (non-porous gloves, mask and goggles) to protect yourself from breathing in or touching mold.
- Toss out anything that is wet or moldy from flood water if it cannot be cleaned and disinfected (for example: mattresses, pillows, carpets, rugs, upholstered furniture, stuffed animals or toys, books, wallpaper and paper products, personal hygiene items and cosmetics).

- Do not mix cleaning products together, especially bleach and ammonia, to avoid toxic fumes.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper and safe use of all cleaning products.
- Remove dry wall and flooring that has been damaged by flood water. Do not caulk it or paint over it because this will not stop mold from growing.

The following resources include more tips on mold cleanup and prevention:

https://www.cdc.gov/mold/images/mold_infographic.jpg

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/>

https://www.cdc.gov/mold/pdfs/Homeowners_and_Renters_Guide.pdf

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-10/documents/moldguide12.pdf>

CARBON MONOXIDE; GAS; POISONING

What do I need to know about Carbon Monoxide poisoning after a flood?

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that can cause sudden illness or death when inhaled. It is an odorless and colorless gas that is a result of burning fuel.
- If you are without power after the flood, do not use any portable generators for electricity inside the home (any machine that uses gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices). The fumes from these machines can build up inside your home.
- Do not use these generators inside your home or any closed spaces, on the balcony or near doors or windows.

Find more tips on CO detection and preventing CO poisoning here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cofacts.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.html>

MASK; PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT; SAFETY

What kind of mask do I need to use if I am cleaning or repairing my house after a flood?

Use masks during all cleanup activities. A filtering mask or respirator (N95 disposable respirator) protects you from breathing in mold and dust.

Find more details on air in your home after a flood and using the right masks here:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/flood_booklet_en.pdf

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/em/downloads/pdf/sandy/res-health.pdf>

MOSQUITOES; RODENT; ANIMALS

What can I do to avoid mosquitos or a rodent infestation?

- Use screens on your windows.
- Wear long pants, socks, and long-sleeved shirts when you are outside.
- Use insect repellents.
- Drain any standing water left outdoors in open containers
- Remove food sources, water, and items that can provide shelter for rodents.
- Wash kitchen items immediately after use
- Dispose of garbage as soon as possible.

The CDC has more detailed tips on avoiding mosquitos, rodents and wild animals here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/animalhazards/facts.html>

WELL; PRIVATE WELL; DISINFECTING WELL WATER

I have a private well. Is it safe to drink from after a flood?

After a flood, your private well water might be contaminated. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has the following guideline on disinfecting private well:

<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gi/gi-432.html>

TRASH; TRASH REMOVAL; DEBRIS

What is the proper way to throw away items or debris from my home?

The city of Houston has the following guideline for debris separation in several languages:

English: <http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/CurbsideDebrisPDF.pdf>

Spanish: http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/CurbsideDebrisPDF_SPN.pdf

Arabic: http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/pdf_files/ar.pdf

Chinese: http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/pdf_files/ch.pdf

Urdu: http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/pdf_files/UR.pdf

Vietnamese: http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/pdf_files/VIET.pdf