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ABOUT YOUR HOUSE

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AFTER THE FLOOD

A Homeowner's Checklist

After a flood, it's important to restore your home to good order as soon as possible to protect your health and prevent further damage to your house and belongings. Whether you do the work yourself or hire a contractor, this handy checklist will help you organize the clean up.

Before you begin

- Put your own safety first. Avoid electrical shock. Wear rubber boots in an area flooded with more than 5 cm (2 in.) of standing water. Keep extension cords out of the water. Shut the power off to the flooded area at the breaker box. Ask your electrical utility for help if needed.
- Record details of damage, with photos or video if possible. Contact your insurance agent and register with your municipality—your municipality may have resources you need, such as future financial assistance.
- Set up a step-by-step action plan to:
 - remove all water, mud and other debris
 - dispose of contaminated household goods
 - rinse away contamination inside the home
 - remove the rinse water
 - disinfect and dry out your house and salvageable possessions.
- Be prepared to make difficult decisions about what to keep and what to throw out. Household items that have been contaminated by sewage, or that have been wet for a long time, will have to be bagged, tagged and discarded according to local regulations.
- Assemble equipment and supplies:
 - gloves, masks and other protective gear
 - pails, mops, squeegees and plastic garbage bags
 - chlorine bleach and **non-ammonia** dishwashing detergent (never mix bleach with ammonia—the fumes are toxic)
 - large containers for soaking bedding and clothing and lines to hang them to dry
 - you may also need to rent extension cords, submersible pumps, wet/dry shop vacuums, and dehumidifiers or heaters.
- Store valuable papers that have been damaged in a freezer until you have time to work on them.

First steps

- Immediately add small amounts of chlorine bleach to standing water.
- Remove standing water with pumps or pails, then with a wet/dry shop vacuum.
- Remove all soaked and dirty materials and debris, including wet insulation and drywall, residual mud and soil, furniture, appliances, clothing and bedding.



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- Hose down any dirt sticking to walls and furnishings, then rinse several times, removing the remaining water with a wet/dry shop vacuum.
- Wash and wipe down all surfaces and structures with chlorine bleach, ensuring that there is adequate cross ventilation to remove fumes. Then rinse again.
- Wipe down surfaces that have not been directly affected with a solution of one part chlorine bleach to four parts cold or tepid (not hot) water, mixed with a small amount of non-ammonia dishwashing detergent. Then rinse.
- Ventilate or dehumidify the house until it is completely dry.
- Work from the top down. Break out all ceilings and walls that have been soaked or that have absorbed water. Remove materials at least 500 mm (20 in.) above the high-water line.
- Rinse, then clean all floors as quickly as possible. Replace flooring that has been deeply penetrated by flood water or sewage.
- Clean all interior cavities with a solution of water, chlorine bleach and non-ammonia dish detergent and dry thoroughly, checking often for mold and killing it with chlorine bleach. Ensure that structural members are dry (which could take weeks) before closing cavities.
- Carpets must be dried within two days. Sewage-soaked carpets must be discarded. Homeowners can't effectively dry large areas of soaked carpets themselves. Qualified professionals are required.

What to keep or discard

- Discard and replace all insulation materials, and all less-expensive articles that have been soaked, including particleboard furniture, mattresses, box springs, stuffed toys and pillows.
- The frames of good quality wood furniture can sometimes be salvaged, but must be cleaned, disinfected, rinsed, and dried by ventilation away from direct sunlight or heat. Coverings, paddings and cushions must be discarded and replaced.
- Scrape heavy dirt from washable clothes, rinse and wash several times in cold water treated with chlorine bleach, and dry quickly.
- Separate valuable papers. Ask a lawyer whether you should save the papers themselves or just the information on them.

Before moving back in

- Do not use flooded appliances, electrical outlets, switch boxes or fuse/breaker panels until they have been checked by your local utility.
- If they have been soaked, replace the furnace blower motor, switches and controls, insulation and filters. Inspect all flooded forced air heating ducts and return-duct pans and have them cleaned out or replaced. Replace insulation inside water heater, refrigerators and freezer if it has been wet.
- Flush and disinfect floor drains and sump pits using undiluted chlorine bleach, and scrub them to remove greasy dirt and grime. Clean footing drains outside the foundation if necessary

Other useful information from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Cleaning Up Your House After a Flood, \$3.95 NHA 6789

Clean-up Procedures for Mold in Houses, \$3.95 NHA 6753

To find out about other CMHC publications, contact:

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