

# CLEANING UP AFTER A FLOOD

## Hand Washing

Remember the golden rule of clean-up work: Wash your hands thoroughly--and do it often! Simple, basic hygiene—hand washing—is the single most important thing you can do to protect your health when you clean up after a flood.

### Be Sure to wash your hands...

- after you touch any surfaces or objects that may have been in contact with flood water or sewage
- before you eat or drink anything
- before you touch your face

### What if there's no running water?

- transport and store clean water in clean plastic containers
- get a beverage cooler equipped with a spigot - and keep it filled with clean water for hand washing

### What if the water is contaminated?

If the water is suspect, add a **tablespoon of bleach to each gallon of water** before you wash your hands with it.

### The fine art of hand washing:

1. Wet hands
2. Soap up
3. Work up a lather
4. Use a nail brush
5. Rinse
6. Use soap and lather up again
7. Rinse
8. Dry hands with paper towel

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service

## Cleaning Up After A Flood Home Restoration

### How do I get my home cleaned up?

#### The basics of drying out your home:

- Use outside air to dry your home.
- Open windows and doors - or use exhaust fans.
- If available, use a room de-humidifier - and empty it often.

### **Drying walls and other surfaces:**

- Cavities in walls, floors and ceilings, must be opened, cleaned, decontaminated and thoroughly dried.
- Walls must be allowed to dry from the inside out.
- Remove mud and water from all surfaces and get surface materials dry within 24-48 hours.
- Release any water or mud that's been trapped in wall, ceiling or floor cavities.
- Remove all interior wall finishing materials and insulation - and throw out any wet insulation.

### **Remember:**

- Most plaster, wallboard and paneling will have to be discarded.
- If you have allergies, wear a dust mask. Consult with your physician if you have questions.
- Be careful if you use a gasoline engine indoors - you could be exposing yourself to carbon monoxide.

### **What can I keep - and what do I have to throw away?**

#### **Carpeting**

- Pull up waterlogged carpet immediately, to prevent any further floor damage
- Carpet pads cannot be saved. They must be removed and discarded.
- Attempt to save carpets or throw rugs only if they would be very expensive to replace.
- Clean and dry your floors thoroughly before re-carpeting.

#### **Floors & Woodwork**

- Remove any mud and silt.
- Scrub floors and woodwork within 48 hours, using a stiff brush, water, detergent and disinfectant.
- Allow all wood to dry thoroughly.

#### **Furniture**

- Discard upholstered furniture if it has been exposed to flood water or sewage.
- Clean, rinse and disinfect wood furniture.
- Place wood furniture outside in a shady area so it will dry slowly.

### **Remember:**

- If any materials are still wet or moist after 24-48 hours, you should assume they have mold growing on them.
- You can disinfect floors or wood surfaces using a solution of ¼ cup bleach in a gallon of water. If mold has already begun to grow, use a stronger solution - approximately ½ gallon of bleach in a five-gallon pail.

### **Salvaging Household Items**

#### **Clothing**

- Line dry all articles before attempting to clean or treat them.
- After drying, brush off loose dirt and debris.
- Send "Dry Clean Only" items to a professional cleaner.
- Wash clothes several times in cold water only. Add up to a cup of bleach per load of wash if it will not harm the clothing.

- Rinse and dry all items as soon as possible.

## **Bedding**

- Throw out mattresses and pillows that have been in contact with flood water or sewage.
- Clean blankets in same way as clothing.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service

## **Cleaning Up After A Flood**

### **Food Safety**

You should generally discard anything in soft packaging or screw-top glass bottles that may have been in contact with flood water. You can sometimes save commercially canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers.

### **To clean canned goods:**

- remove the labels
- wash in water and detergent
- sanitize with a solution of one tablespoon bleach in a gallon of water

### **Discard canned goods if:**

- the surface is rusted and pitted
- the can is swollen or leaking
- the can is badly creased or dented at the rims or seams

### **Goods in rigid plastic containers should be saved only if they:**

- were not submerged in flood water
- are not soiled around the cap or closure
- do not have a defective closure
- do not have a dented cap or crown, or an abnormal rim seal

### **Discard refrigerated or frozen food if:**

- it normally requires refrigeration, and it's been above 40 degrees F. for four hours or more
- it had been frozen, and it's been thawed for two hours or more
- it has deteriorated in quality, or may have been in contact with flood water
- **And always remember--If in doubt.....throw it out!**