

GUIDELINES FOR HOMEOWNERS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED FLOODING OR SEWER BACKUPS

1. Flooding caused by sewage backups may be covered by your homeowner's insurance policy. You should notify your insurance company of the loss and keep a detailed list of all damaged items in the event that a claim can be made or loss is allowed as a tax deduction.
2. If you have not already done so, you may want to contact a plumber.
3. There are contractors who provide cleanup services. You can find them on the Web or listed in the Yellow Pages under Janitor Service and Sewer Cleaners.
4. If the home has not been vacated during the flood period, wash or flush down walls and floors as soon as the floodwaters recede.
5. If the home has been vacated, do not move the family back until there is:
 - a. Electricity
 - b. An adequate water supply
 - c. Toilet facilities available
 - d. Heating system in working order
 - e. Clean, dry bedding available.

Do not bring children into the flood area during cleanup.

6. In order to rehabilitate a home, adults (no children) may return, but should TAKE A SUPPLY OF SAFE DRINKING WATER WITH THEM in clean bottles or jugs. If possible, obtain water from a municipal source. In the event that municipal water cannot be obtained and water must be obtained from a private well outside the flood area, be sure to disinfect it with one of the common liquid laundry bleaches, such as Clorox or Roman Cleanser, etc., by adding three or four drops to each one gallon of water and mix and let stand for thirty minutes. This treatment will make the water safe; however, a chlorine taste should be noticed.

Water from wells and cisterns located in the flooded area is UNSAFE AND SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR DRINKING or cooking, brushing teeth, dishwashing or clothes washing UNLESS BOILED FOR 10 MINUTES OR TREATED WITH CHLORINE.

7. Be cautious of electrical outlets or gas lines when entering a flooded basement. Have the utility service department shut off the electricity and gas line if possible. Do not handle any connected electrical cords or appliances if the current is still on. Get assistance before attempting to disconnect cords or open the fuse box in a flooded basement. Do not light a match in an enclosed area where gas could be present. Check all affected pilot lights or burners on gas fired or oil fired appliances before placing them back in service. If electricity is connected to an appliance which has had the motor controls submerged, do not attempt to start it until you have consulted your appliance service company or dealer.

8. While a basement is still flooded, avoid flushing toilets or using other plumbing fixtures because the discharge could increase the hazard or make the basement more difficult to clean.
9. After the floodwaters recede, drain surface pools by ditching or pumping. Drain all flooded basements by natural drainage or pumping. Wash or flush down walls and floors, if possible, during the drainage or pumping process.

As a final cleanup of walls, floors, cupboards, dishes, etc. use plenty of soap or dishwashing compound. Use warm or hot water if possible. Areas may be disinfected by use of Lysol or chlorine solution. Use eight tablespoons or ½ cup of Clorox or Roman Cleanser per gallon of water.

During the cleanup of basements or other enclosed areas, provide as much ventilation as possible by opening windows and using fans if electricity is available.

10. Discard all bottled goods sealed with crimped caps that were in the flood. Destroy the contents to make certain that no one else will use such bottled goods.

Discard all vegetables, such as potatoes, carrots, cabbage, onions and others that were in contact with the floodwaters. Canned fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed. Wash the outside of the can with soap and hot water, using a brush around the cover and rubber rings. The cans and jars should then be immersed in chlorinated water for at least 15 minutes using the same strength solution as recommended on the previous page.

Food stored in a refrigerator where the electricity has been off for more than 72 hours should be examined carefully. If the food has not reached a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or above, it could be refrozen and used without endangering health. However, the flavor and texture might be damaged. Food with a temperature above 40 degrees Fahrenheit should be discarded. Food in a freezer where the door or lid has been submerged in floodwater should be discarded if there is evidence that water has entered the freezer compartment. Any discarded food should be placed in covered vermin-proof receptacles until final pick-up or disposal.

11. Clothing, carpets, upholstered furniture, toys, bedding and similar items should be discarded unless they are cleaned and disinfected. Movable objects should be put outdoors to dry and exposed to sunlight. Some salvage agencies or companies are equipped to process contaminated material. Discarded clothing should not be left accessible to scavengers pending pickup. Stores with flood-damaged merchandise are required to obtain clearance from either the local health department or the State Department of Agriculture before offering any such goods for sale.
12. After cleaning the basement, make sure that all clothing and parts of the body that came in contact with the sewage are thoroughly washed. Prevent tracking sewage into the living quarters of the house.

NOTE: The use of trade names is for example only and does not constitute an endorsement.