



AFTER A FLOOD

Cleaning Up Your Home

1. **Protect yourself and loved ones against hazards.** People with breathing problems like asthma or who have weakened immune systems including children should stay away from moldy sites. Make sure the structure is safe before doing clean-up work. **Protect your mouth and nose** against breathing in mold: wear at least an N-95 respirator. **Protect your skin.** Wear protective gloves (non-latex, vinyl, nitrile, or rubber). Do not touch mold or moldy items with bare hands. **Protect your eyes.** Wear goggles that provide eye protection. Choose goggles designed to keep out dust and small particles. Safety glasses or goggles that have open vent holes will not protect you against dust and small particles.
2. **Remove standing water and wet materials.** Use a wet vacuum to remove water from floors, carpets, and hard surfaces. Dry your home and everything in it as quickly as you can – within 24 to 48 hours if you can.
3. **Open all doors and windows** when you are working and leave as many open as is safe when you leave.
 - o Open inside doors, especially closets and interior rooms, to let air flow to all areas. Take doors off their hinges if you need to.
 - o Open kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanity doors; remove drawers, wipe them clean, and stack them to dry.
 - o Open the attic access to let air flow to the attic. Before you open the attic door, make sure nothing will fall on you.
4. When electricity is safe to use, **use fans and dehumidifiers** to remove moisture. Do not use fans if mold has already started to grow, because the fans may spread the mold.
5. **Clean with water and a detergent.** Remove all mold you can see. Rinse and sanitize using a bleach solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented household (5.25% concentration) liquid bleach per gallon of water. (Reminder, do not mix cleaning products together. DO NOT mix bleach and ammonia because it can create toxic vapors.)
6. Painting or caulking over mold will not prevent mold from growing. Fix the water problem completely and clean up all the mold before you paint or caulk.
7. **Throw away items that can't be cleaned and dried.** Throw away anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned and dried completely within 24 to 48 hours. If you have precious items that you want to preserve, follow these guidelines from the Smithsonian Institute: https://www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/index.html

Remember Food Safety

1. **Do not eat** any food that may have come into contact with flood water.
2. **Discard any food and beverage** that is **not in a waterproof container** if there is *any* chance that it has come into contact with flood water.



- Food containers that are waterproof include undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans and “retort pouches” (like flexible, shelf-stable juice or seafood pouches).
 - Food containers that are *not* waterproof include those with screw-caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped caps.
 - Also discard cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods if they have come in contact with flood water, because they cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
3. **Discard any food in damaged cans.** Damaged cans are those with swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting that is severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening with a manual, wheel-type can opener. *See box on next page for steps to clean/save undamaged packages.*
 4. **Thoroughly wash metal pans, ceramic dishes, and utensils** (including can openers) with soap and water, using hot water if available. Rinse and then sanitize them by boiling in clean water or immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented household (5.25% concentration) liquid bleach per gallon of water.
 5. **Thoroughly wash countertops** with soap and water, using hot water if available. Rinse and then sanitize by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented household (5.25% concentration) liquid bleach per gallon of water. Allow to air dry.

Use Water from a Safe Source

1. Only use **water from a safe source** for drinking and washing or preparing food.
2. Use **bottled water** that has not been exposed to flood waters, if it is available.
3. If you don’t have bottled water, you should **boil or disinfect water** to make it safe. (see steps below)
4. If you have a **well** that has been flooded, the water should be **tested and disinfected** after flood waters recede. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact your local or state health department or agricultural extension agent for specific advice.

How to Boil or Disinfect Water To Make It Safe

If the water is cloudy, first filter it through clean cloths, or allow it to settle and then draw off the clear water for boiling/ disinfecting. Then, follow one of these two procedures:

Boiling

Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be present.

1. Boil the water for 1 minute.
2. Let it cool, and store it in clean containers with covers.

Disinfecting with Bleach

Bleach will kill some, but not all, types of disease-causing organisms that may be in the water.

- Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of unscented household (5.25% concentration) liquid bleach for each gallon of water.
- Stir it well and let it stand for 30 minutes before you use it.
- Store disinfected water in clean containers with covers.