

Safety, Effectiveness Key Issues For Flood Damage Clean Up

by _____, President

(Home Builder Association)

The tragedy of floods devastates the home owners who face cleaning up the mess left behind the raging waters. **[Insert HBA]** would like you to know about the safe and effective methods for cleaning and repair if you are faced with flood damage.

Before beginning cleaning and repairing your home, be sure that there is no further danger of flood crests. Inspect the house from the outside to assess how safe it is to enter. Wear protective clothing including rubber or work gloves, long-sleeved shirts and long pants to provide protection from contaminated water, vermin and debris.

Be aware of electrical safety and threats from fire and falling buildings. Assume that the electrical system may be unsafe until it has been thoroughly tested. Make sure that all electric and gas service is shut off before entering a structure for the first time.

Unless you have received official word that the water supply is safe, purify all water for drinking, cooking and washing. Sterilize cookware, dishes and utensils before using them.

Contact your insurance adjuster as soon as possible, but you do not have to wait for the adjuster to arrive before you start your clean up efforts. Cleaning should begin as soon as it is safe to do so, but permanent repairs should not be attempted until the home is thoroughly dry. This process may take several weeks.

If you need to hire a contractor to perform repairs on any part of your home, find out if the contractor has a permanent business address and can provide references. Find out how long the contractor has been in business and whether the Better Business Bureau has any record of unresolved complaints. Make sure you get a complete, clearly written contract for the work to

be done. Do not pay any cash up front unless you have signed a valid contract. For a list of local contractors and repair professionals, contact **[Insert HBA name and contact info]**.

To thoroughly clean walls and woodwork, use a water solution with disinfectant or bleach, and use a brush to scrub away mud and dirt. If the electrical system is operating safely, a heater, fan or air conditioner can cut drying time.

Remove the interior surface of damaged, insulated walls to above the water height. Discard any wet insulation, and wash interior studs with disinfectant to prevent mildew. Keep the area well ventilated. Before replacing the insulation and the wall material, the open walls should be allowed to dry thoroughly. This process may take a month or more.

If you decide to clean the carpets yourself, pull up all water-soaked carpets and pads. Hose them off and scrub them with a solution of detergent and water if heavily soiled. Rinsing with a mild solution of water and chlorine bleach can retard odor and mildew, but chlorine bleach should not be used on wool and certain other types of fibers. Be sure the carpet is thoroughly dry before relaying it. Rubber and waffle-weave pads can be reused.

If water has seeped beneath sheet flooring, the entire sheet should be removed and replaced. For tile floors, loose tiles may be re-cemented if the floor is otherwise acceptable after it dries. Check that the subfloor is thoroughly dry before applying any new floor coverings. The drying process may take weeks or months.

Take flood-affected wood furniture outdoors to hose off. All drawers and other detachable parts should be removed for cleaning. Dry the furniture slowly to prevent warping, and be sure not to dry it in direct sunlight. Discard mattresses that have been soaked in flood waters.

Most motorized appliances can be saved. Turn off the electricity or other power source, unplug the appliance and open it as much as possible to wipe it clean. If possible, tilt the appliance to drain any standing water. Let the appliance dry and have it checked by an appliance repair professional before you plug it in.

Cleaning up after any disaster is never easy or fast, but it can be safe and effective. Further tips on cleaning can be obtained at www.nahb.org or by contacting **[insert HBA information]**.