

Disaster Relief

Home Cleanup and Renovation for Floors



Warped and De-Laminated Floors

Not all warped wood flooring can be repaired. The extent of damage depends partly on the kind of material used in the floor. Different woods react differently to dampness or flooding.

Plywood

Many homes have plywood subfloors. Plywood usually separates (delaminates) when exposed to excessive moisture. This makes the covering material (carpet, sheet-flooring, or tile) buckle. Consult a reliable contractor for this work.

A small section of the subfloor that has separated can be replaced with new plywood. If the entire floor has delaminated, remove the entire subfloor and replace it. Thoroughly dry the subfloor before recovering it with carpet or new flooring.

Hardwood

Badly warped hardwood floors usually can't be repaired. If the floor is clearly unrepairable, take it up and discard it. Allow subflooring to dry for several months before installing another floor over it.

To repair slightly warped hardwood floors:

1. Clean and dry the floor completely before attempting any repairs. This may take weeks or even months.
2. If the floor is still warped in places when it is dry, then individual boards or sections of the floor may need to be replaced. (If boards are tongue and groove, consult a carpenter about the special techniques necessary for this work.)
3. You may be able to draw some buckled flooring into place by nailing the bulged spots. Some humps may be removed by planing or sanding. Heavily planed or sanded floors, though unsuitable to be used uncovered, can serve as a base for new flooring or for carpet or resilient floor covering.

Pine

Warped wide pine board flooring often flattens out after it has thoroughly dried. Clean the floor and let it dry for several months. Using the furnace as much as possible during the drying time speeds up the process. Do not try to repair the floor until it is dry. If any boards are still slightly warped when dry, use the same technique as for warped hardwood floors. When laying a new floor or subfloor, remove baseboards and moldings. The finished floor should be the same level as the original floor, if possible. If floor level changes, doors must be refitted to the new level. Consult a carpenter before trying this.

Repairing Flooded Tile, Linoleum, and Vinyl Floor Coverings

Subfloor

Water coming up from below causes the most damage to subfloor material. If a linoleum or vinyl floor covering is not under water many days, the floor covering may partially protect the subfloor material. If a plywood or hardwood subfloor is wet, you should remove the linoleum or vinyl and replace the subfloor material.

Removing Loosened Floor Coverings

Some floor coverings may crack or break when you try to loosen them. Contact a reputable dealer to find out what solvent loosens adhesives with the least damage to linoleum or vinyl. Heating with a heat lamp or propane torch may make the covering less brittle. How easily the covering can be lifted depends on the material and adhesive. If the adhesive is waterproof, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to remove the floor covering without considerable damage.

Tiles

If the floor has not been badly soaked, you may not need to replace the subfloor. It is possible to re-cement loosened tiles of any type. Be sure the floor is thoroughly dry before trying to re-cement. Blisters may be left in the

linoleum tiles after warped wooden flooring has dried. Carefully puncture each blister with a nail. With a hand syringe, force diluted linoleum paste through the hole, and weight the linoleum down with bricks.

Sheet Linoleum or Vinyl

Water may have seeped under a loose section of vinyl or sheet linoleum. Carefully remove the entire sheet. Let the floor dry thoroughly before trying to re-cement the linoleum. Thorough drying may take as long as 6 weeks or more. Use a new sheet of lining felt before re-cementing the floor covering.

Cleaning Flooded Floors and Woodwork

1. Shovel out the worst of the mud and silt before it dries. Use a hose if necessary.
2. Before the house has dried out, scrub floors and woodwork with a stiff brush, plenty of water, a detergent, and a disinfectant. Remove mud and silt from corners, cracks, and crevices.
3. Water may have accumulated in partitions and exterior walls. Drain these areas by removing baseboards and drilling holes between studs a few inches above the floor. You may need to remove sections of the wallboard or plaster so that wall studs and interiors can dry thoroughly—a process that may take months.
4. Give floors a final thorough washing with a non-sudsy cleaning product.

Removing Surface Mildew

1. Heat the room to 50–60°F to help dry mildewed wood.
2. Scrub mildewed floors and woodwork with a mild alkaline solution such as washing soda or non-phosphate detergent (4–6 tablespoons to 1 gallon

of water), available in paint and grocery stores. Or use a cloth dipped in hot water, or in a mixture of borax dissolved in hot water.

3. Rinse with clear water.
4. Wipe clean floors dry with old towels.
5. Allow wood to dry thoroughly.
6. Apply a mildew-resistant paint after woodwork has thoroughly dried.
7. Replace badly infected wood.

Bleaching Wood Stained by Mildew

1. Make sure the room is well ventilated, and remove paint or varnish with paint remover.
2. Apply a solution of 3 tablespoons oxalic acid dissolved in a pint of water to the stains. (You can buy oxalic acid crystals at drug stores.) CAUTION: Oxalic acid is poisonous. Label it clearly and keep it out of children's reach.
3. Rinse with clear water. Wipe dry.
4. Dry thoroughly before refinishing.

Refinishing

You may prefer to have floors professionally refinished. If you decide to do the work yourself:

1. Be sure floors and subfloors are thoroughly dry.
2. Sand the surface until it is clean and smooth. Heavily planed floors may never look good again, but they can serve as a base for carpeting, tile, or sheet flooring.
3. If floor is oak: apply a filler, then apply two coats of a penetrating floor seal or spar varnish. Sand between coats.
4. Apply varnish, following directions on can.
5. Treat fir flooring in the same way, but omit the filler.

Information Sheet 1702 (POD-12-15)

From The Disaster Handbook – 1998 National Edition, University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences SP2431.



Copyright 2018 by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved. This publication may be copied and distributed without alteration for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Produced by Agricultural Communications.

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution. Discrimination in university employment, programs, or activities based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by applicable law is prohibited. Questions about equal opportunity programs or compliance should be directed to the Office of Compliance and Integrity, 56 Morgan Avenue, P.O. 6044, Mississippi State, MS 39762, (662) 325-5839.

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director