

# Disaster Relief: Priorities for Cleanup and Repair

Priorities for cleanup and repair vary depending on the type and seriousness of damage. Buildings may not be habitable during repair.

- Examine building structure.
  - Check foundations for settling, cracking, or undermining.
  - Examine walls, floors, doors, and windows for necessary repairs.
  - You may want to repair temporarily until extensive work can be done.
- If a basement is flooded, start pumping the water in stages. Pump out about a third of the water each day.
- Get the electrical system in working order.
  - If the switchbox is in a flooded basement, do not turn the electricity back on until you have pumped out the water.
  - Take electrical appliances to a qualified service repair center as soon as possible.
- Get the water system in working order. Disinfect wells and water system.
- Shovel out mud and silt before it dries.
- Before flooded walls and floors dry, wash them down with a hose. Start at the highest point of flooding and work downward.
- Scrub and disinfect walls and floors.
- Start heating system, if possible, to speed up drying.
  - Before operating the heating system, you may need to clean, dry, and recondition it.
  - Make sure chimneys are clean before starting the system.
- Dry out walls and floors.
  - If required for proper drying, strip drywall up to water level.
  - Drill holes in exterior siding.
  - Complete drying may take months.
- Repair buckled walls and floors.
- Clean and dry household items, furniture, carpets, clothing, dishes, and bedding. Disinfect when necessary.
- Treat items for mildew as needed.
- Care for damaged trees, shrubs, and lawn.
- Repaint, repair, and refinish as necessary.

## Supplies and Equipment for Home Cleanup

### Cleaning Supplies

- Non-phosphate detergent<sup>1</sup>
- Bleach<sup>2</sup>
- Disinfectant
- Ammonia
- Scouring powder
- Rubber gloves
- Sturdy boots or heavy-soled shoes

<sup>1</sup>United States manufacturers have removed phosphate from laundry detergents.

<sup>2</sup>Use bleach sparingly, if at all. New recommendations by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) caution against its use.

### Equipment for Small Jobs

- Buckets
- Tools (crowbar, hammer, screwdriver)
- Sponges and cloths
- Scrub brushes
- Scoops
- Throw-away containers for garbage and a container to carry from house to street
- Water hose

### Equipment for Large Jobs

- Buckets
- Tools
- Brooms
- Shovels
- Garden hoe
- Sponge mop or a mop that is easily squeezed out
- Water hose
- Wheelbarrow
- Dolly
- Bushel baskets
- Wash tubs (for soaking objects)

# Resources

For more detailed information and illustrations about flood and mold cleanup, visit the following websites, or search by title and sponsoring organization.

- [A Field Guide for Flooded Home Cleanup](#): An illustrated 18-page booklet created through a cooperative effort of the National Center for Healthy Housing, NeighborWorks America, Enterprise Community Partners, and other partners.
- [A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home](#): Photos and instructions may be viewed online, or a booklet may be downloaded, with EPA recommendations.
- [Flood Cleanup and the Air in Your Home](#): Basic safety and cleanup information from EPA in an easy-to-read booklet with color illustrations. Also available in Spanish.
- [Disaster Relief & Recovery Services](#): Resources provided by the American Red Cross.
- [Recover and Rebuild](#): Resources provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) resources.

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