

Disaster Relief

Cleaning Household Utensils and Metals



Cleaning and Sterilizing Dishes and Cooking Utensils

Wash and sanitize any dishes, pots, pans, or cooking utensils that were in contact with floodwater. Water for washing and sanitizing must be certified safe to use.

1. Remove detachable parts, such as blades, plastic or wooden handles, and screens.
2. Wash dishes, pots, pans, and utensils in hot, soapy water. Use a brush, if necessary.
3. Rinse in clear water after washing. Place dishes in a wire basket or other container and dip them in a sanitizing solution. Sanitizing solution can be prepared by mixing 1 tablespoon regular unscented 5–6% chlorine bleach (not concentrated) in 1 gallon of warm (not hot) water. Hot water causes the bleach to dissipate, weakening the solution. Or use a sanitizing solution recommended by local health authorities.
4. Air-dry dishes in a clean and sanitized dish rack. Using a dishtowel could recontaminate the dishes.
5. Wash cupboards and other surfaces that were in contact with floodwater with soapy water. Rinse them and wipe with a disinfecting solution before storing food, dishes, and utensils in them.

Cleaning Household Metals

Rust causes the most damage to flooded household metals, especially iron. Use the following treatments to control rusting.

Iron Pots, Pans, and Utensils

1. Wash with soap and water, using a stiff brush, scouring powder, or steel wool.
2. If rust remains, wipe with an oil-saturated cloth, or use a commercial rust remover.
3. Remove rust from kitchen utensils by scouring with steel wool.
4. Wash in hot soapy water, rinse, and dry thoroughly.
5. Season iron pans and utensils with a generous amount of unsalted cooking oil. Heat in a 250°F oven for 2 or 3 hours. This will let the oil soak into the pores of the metal. As it heats, apply more oil as needed. When seasoning is completed, wipe off the excess oil.

Hardware

1. Coat iron hardware with petroleum jelly or machine oil to prevent further rusting.
2. Use stove polish on stoves or similar ironwork.

Locks and Hinges

Locks and hinges, especially iron ones, should be taken apart, wiped with kerosene, and oiled. Follow the same procedure as for iron hardware. If you can't remove locks or hinges, squirt a little machine oil into the bolt opening or keyhole. Work the knobs to distribute the oil. This helps prevent rusting of the springs and metal casing. (Do not use too much oil; oil on woodwork makes painting difficult.)

Stainless Steel, Nickel-Copper Alloy, Nickel, and Chrome

1. Wash thoroughly, and polish with a fine-powdered cleanser.
2. If furniture plating or hardware is broken so that the base metal is exposed and rusted, wipe with kerosene, and then wash and dry the surface. Wax after each use to prevent further rusting.

Aluminum Pans and Utensils

1. Wash thoroughly with hot, soapy water. Scour any unpolished surfaces, such as the insides of pans, with soapy steel wool pads. Rub in one direction only.
2. Polish aluminum-plated surfaces with a fine cleansing powder or silver polish. Do not scour.
3. Sanitize in a chlorine bleach solution (1 tablespoon regular unscented 5–6% chlorine bleach per gallon of warm, not hot, water). Do not use concentrated bleach.
4. To remove dark stains from aluminum pans: Fill the pan with water. Add 1 tablespoon vinegar or 2 teaspoons cream of tartar for each quart of water. Boil for 10 to 15 minutes, scour with steel wool, wash with soap, rinse, and dry.

Copper and Brass

1. Polish with a copper or brass polish, or rub with a cloth soaked with vinegar or with a piece of salted lemon.
2. Always wash copper items thoroughly with soapy water after using acids or commercial polishes, or they will tarnish rapidly.
3. Wash lacquered ornamental copper in warm, soapy water. Rinse with warm water and wipe dry. Do not polish. Do not soak.

Note: Do not use copper or brass for food preparation or service.

Pewter

1. Wash thoroughly with hot, soapy water, rinse, and dry. Use a soft toothbrush to get into crevices.
2. Rub on silver polish (paste or liquid, not the dip type) with a soft cloth. Use a soft toothbrush to get into crevices.
3. Rinse in hot, soapy water and dry.
4. Check for small holes, cracked joints, and dents. If the pewter needs extensive mending, let a professional fix it.
5. Small holes can be mended by cleaning the metal inside the pewter object with steel wool, then filling with pewter epoxy mender. Carefully follow label instructions.
6. Replace felt or other protection materials that have separated from household decorative accessories such as bookends, ashtrays, and candleholders. Buy felt or protective materials in a fabric store. Glue in place with rubber cement.

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