



NEW YORK STATE DISASTER RECOVERY

Think Safety First

Information on What to Do After a Flood

New York State and local government officials caution that recovering from a flood involves taking many special precautions, including the following:

Sanitation and Hygiene: Preventing illness

- Basic hygiene is very important during this emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before eating and after toilet use, cleanup activities or handling items contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Flood waters may contain fecal matter from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and disinfected or boiled water. Apply antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater or with toys that are contaminated by floodwater.
- If floodwaters are covering your septic tank and leach field you should not use any flush toilets attached to the system.

Preventing the Growth of Mold

- Moisture that enters buildings from leaks or flooding accelerates mold growth. Molds can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions and continue to damage materials after the storm.
- Remove standing water from your home or office. Remove wet materials promptly and ventilate; use fans and dehumidifiers if possible.
- If mold growth has already occurred, it is best to have a professional remove it.
- Individuals with known mold allergies or asthma should never clean or remove mold.
- Be careful about mixing household cleaners and disinfectants, as combining certain types of products can produce toxic fumes and result in injury or death.

Additional Household Cleanup

- Walls, hard-surfaced floors and many other household surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water.
- Thoroughly disinfect surfaces that come in contact with food and children's play areas.
- Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean.
- Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, must be air dried in the sun and sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant.
- Steam-clean all carpeting.
- Replace fiberboard, insulation and disposable filters in your heating/cooling system.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during clean-up.

It can be difficult to throw away items in a home, particularly those with sentimental value. However, keeping certain items soaked by sewage or floodwaters may be unhealthy. Materials that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours should be discarded.

Garbage Storage, Collection and Disposal

As you start cleaning, you will likely produce a great deal of garbage. Local authorities will tell you where and when collection will occur. Garbage invites insects and rodents. Rodents, in particular, may be looking for food because the flood may have destroyed their homes and normal food source.

- Store any garbage in watertight, rodent/insect-proof containers with tight-fitting covers. Use plastic liners if available.
- Put garbage in a convenient location but not near your well.

Standing Water: Preventing mosquito-borne illness

Heavy rains and flooding can lead to an increase in mosquitoes that may be infected with West Nile virus. To protect against mosquitoes, remain diligent in your personal mosquito protection efforts. Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours. Also:

- Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- Repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), picaridin or OLE (oil of lemon eucalyptus) are options. Use strictly according to label instructions. Do not allow children to apply repellents and avoid applying repellents to the hands of young children.
- Check around your home to rid the area of standing water.
- Eliminate other breeding sites—remove old tires and turn over or remove empty plastic containers.

For additional information, please contact your local health department or visit www.semo.state.ny.us or www.nyhealth.gov.