

---

***Helpful Hints to help you  
through a Water Damage Event***

---

---

## **WATER DAMAGE**

**Q.** My Building and contents have been damaged by water or sewer backup. Is there anything I can do to minimize permanent damage and to salvage and/or restore as much as possible?

**A.** Yes, of course. When the water recedes a layer of mud/dirt/sewage could be left behind. The best way to remove this is by shoveling or scraping. The walls and floors should be hosed down to remove the remaining mud. **DO NOT ALLOW THE MUD TO DRY – wash it off while still wet.** To control odors and effectively clean flooded surfaces such as walls and floors, wash them down with an anti-microbial agent (such as Concrobium, Benefect, or see your local hardware store for assistance). It is necessary to first remove all the silt, mud and debris so that the agent is effective.

Professional restoration, cleaning and salvage companies can provide additional assistance. Many will offer “free advice”. Such companies can provide helpful restoration and salvage advice through its expert staff.

## **HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL HINTS FOR MORE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS**

### **PERSONAL SAFETY RULES**

Sewage and flood waters pose a threat to human health. During cleanup protect yourself from contamination and injury.

- Make sure power is off before touching electrical equipment, cords or outlets.

To help prevent illness during basement cleanup:

- Wear protective clothing, rubber boots, and waterproof gloves
- Remind yourself and your co-workers to wash hands frequently, especially before eating
- Avoid direct skin contact with contaminated water and surfaces

- Do not rub your mouth, eyes, ears, and nose
- Do not expose open cuts and sores to contamination
- If you sustain a cut or scratch, cleanse the wound and consult a physician immediately
- Change your clothes daily and wash contaminated clothes separately from others
- Keep children and pets out of the affected area

- REMOVE water as quickly as possible. Removing contents that are saturated will reduce drying time. They may be set outside or in a garage to dry separately.

- WASHING machines, dryers, refrigerators, air conditioners and ranges should be washed clean and dried completely as soon as possible, as in most cases, they will not be damaged unless they were operating at the time they became immersed.

- PLACE books on edge, being certain that all the pages are separated.

- IF you have an air conditioner, turn it on to reduce humidity.

- USE fans to circulate air.

- KEEP a list of any items that have to be thrown out.

- WASH concrete off and apply an anti-microbial agent.

- IF curtains or draperies are completely soaked, hose them down immediately. Draperies should be taken to a professional cleaner. Request that the cleaner guarantee, or at least estimate the final condition of the curtains and/or draperies.

- ELECTRIC motors such as heater, washing machine, dryer, refrigerator, fans, air conditioner and compressors should be unplugged before any cleanup is attempted. Sealed motor units require little service after submersion, except they should be quickly cleaned, dried and oiled at lubrication points. Unsealed motors should be rinsed with clear water under low pressure, while being turned over slowly by hand. A large fan or reasonable heat source should be used to dry the motors as quickly as possible. Wipe dry electrical connections or metals that are

beginning to corrode. After the entire unit has been thoroughly dried, lubricate lightly and plug in. Once the motor is running, leave it on for a period of time so that its own heat will provide thorough drying. An electric motor may be baked at temperatures of 100-150 degrees in a regular oven. A hair dryer can be used to dry electrical outlets and other electrical devices.

- FIXTURES may often hold water. Inspect and empty out water. Allow to dry thoroughly before using.

- UPHOLSTERED furniture, automobile upholstery and other household articles should be thoroughly washed with soap and water or washed thoroughly with upholstery shampoo, wiped down, exposed to sun and air until thoroughly dry.

- WOOD furniture that is glued together will usually come apart, as glue is water soluble. Similarly, you can expect wood veneers to separate and warp as the glue dissolves. Furniture that is screwed or nailed together may be salvaged, if warping does not occur. Take all wooden furniture outdoors, but keep it out of direct sunlight to reduce warping. A garage or carport is a good place for drying. Remove drawers and other moving parts as soon as possible but do not pry open swollen drawers from the front. Instead, remove the backing and push the drawers out.

- HARDWOOD floors should be scraped clean of mud and hosed clean. Usually wood floors will buckle and warp and must be replaced. If buckling is not severe, sanding floors may be sufficient. Do not dry floors rapidly – allow to air dry. Do not sand raised edges as good wood flooring will dry out to its original condition in four to five months.

- MAGAZINES are usually a total loss. If a magazine is particularly valuable, an attempt may be made to take it apart page by page, spreading pages out to dry in a ventilated area.

- VALUABLE paintings should be taken to a professional restorer. Paintings may be wiped with a mild soap solution and soft cloth. Charcoals, prints or pastels may be dried flat on a towel or other absorbent material. Oils may be gently hosed.

- PLASTER walls and ceilings should be allowed to dry. Heat the rooms if possible. Wash down with an anti-microbial agent. Plaster ceilings may contain water deposits behind the plaster which will cause sagging and eventual dropping. If you suspect there are any deposits of water in the ceiling, turn off electricity and remove the light fixtures. Water should then drain through fixture hole. If there is no fixture or drainage is not otherwise complete, drill several small holes in the ceiling to allow further drainage.

- AREA or throw rugs should be immediately hosed down and placed outside to dry. Wall-to-wall carpeting should be scraped clean of mud and rinsed off. If a wall-to-wall carpet has been laid on concrete, you may attempt to dry it with a commercial power vacuum used to absorb water from rugs. If the rug has been laid on a wooden floor or other type of flooring subject to water damage, the rug may be pulled up. If the backing for the rug is waffle-type material, this type of backing can be washed and dried and will probably be serviceable. If the backing is the fiber-type, it is most likely ruined. Rugs pulled up will shrink and will not fit the floors where they were previously placed. Little can be done to prevent such shrinkage. If rugs are particularly valuable, call a professional rug cleaner for advice. If the carpet must be thrown out, keep a 6 inch by 6 inch sample of the rug to assist in evaluating your loss.

-ELECTRONIC appliances, including sound and video devices, if completely covered by water should be hosed down and thoroughly wiped off, being careful not to cause breakage to accessible electrical connections. Dry as quickly as possible. Do not attempt to operate the equipment until it is completely dry. If it still does not work after being thoroughly dried, consult a repair person.

- TILES which are waterproof and have been laid with a waterproof glue should not be ruined by submersion. If water-soluble glue was used, the tiles will start to come up soon after the waters have subsided. If the tile is laid on Masonite or wood floors, the floor under the tiles may buckle, causing the tiles to come loose. Ceramic tiles should be unaffected but the wall behind the tiles may buckle or warp, causing tiles to come loose.

- MILDEW can be removed from dry wood with an anti-microbial agent.

- CLEAN metal at once then wipe with a kerosene-soaked cloth. A light coat of oil will prevent iron from rusting. Scour all utensils, and if necessary, use fine steel wool on unpolished surfaces. Aluminum may be brightened by scrubbing with a solution of vinegar, cream of tartar and hot water.

- TAKE pictures to assist in documenting your damage.

- PROTECT your property from further damage.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

#### **FLOODED BASEMENT: PROCEDURES FOR CLEAN-UP**

Sewage and flood water pose a threat to human health. During cleanup protect yourself from contamination by wearing rubber boots, waterproof gloves, and protective garments. Wash your hands thoroughly when the job is done. People whose immune systems are compromised are considered to be at a greater risk and should not attempt this type of cleanup.

#### **TIPS:**

- ❖ Provide adequate ventilation during the cleanup procedure
- ❖ Remove all water, mud, silt
- ❖ Discard absorbent materials that have been exposed to sewage and flood water contamination (ie. Rugs, carpets, cloth, wall coverings and insulation)
- ❖ Thoroughly clean and mop the area starting at the floor and working up (this will remove initial contamination and help to prevent the spread of debris)
- ❖ Wash all surfaces (floors, walls, and ceilings) with soap and hot water using a brush
- ❖ Disinfect all surfaces with an approved anti-microbial agent, follow manufacturer's instructions.

#### **Disinfectants**

Disinfection is important to ensure that disease causing organisms (germs) are destroyed. A thorough cleaning must be done before disinfection to ensure effectiveness.

*Always follow manufacturer's label instructions and use in a well-ventilated area.*

## **CLEANING FLOOD SOAKED CLOTHING AND BEDDING**

CLOTHES that have been covered with water should be immediately put on a line and hosed down. After mud has been removed, normal laundering and dry cleaning should adequately take care of the clothing. Separate all laundry items to avoid running of colors. If these materials have been subject to sewage contamination, they may be further disinfected by a final rinse in a chlorine bleach solution. To minimize fading, follow the manufacturer's directions carefully when treating colored materials with chlorine bleach solutions. Depending on the source of the water, these items may not be salvageable.

- Flood-soiled clothing and bedding should be considered contaminated, and should be disinfected as you wash them.
- Don't use your washing machine until your water is safe to drink and your sewer line works.
- Mattresses, futons, quilts, comforters, and pillows cannot be adequately disinfected and should be discarded.

### **Steps for cleaning and disinfecting clothing:**

- Separate wet items as soon as possible
- Take clothes outdoors and shake dried mud and dirt. Hose off extremely muddy items
- Soak badly soiled items overnight in cold water and detergent
- Wash clothes and linens in detergent and warm water if possible
- Add chlorine bleach to the wash cycle to remove most mildew and to sanitize clothing. Follow the instructions on the bleach container to ensure proper disinfection. Add color-safe (oxygen) bleach to clothes where chlorine bleach is not recommended. However, remember that color-safe bleaches do not disinfect, but will remove stains and odors.
- Put washable blankets (acrylic, cotton) through two complete washing cycles.
- Air dry or use an automatic dryer at proper temperature settings
- Wool blankets should be put through a dry cleaning process.

**Note: Clothing that cannot be washed in this fashion should be dry-cleaned. These items should be air-dried and taken to the dry cleaner as soon as possible. Furs and leathers should be taken in for a professional cleaning.**

## **FOOD CONTAMINATION**

When in doubt throw it out. Don't eat food contaminated by flood waters.

- ANY food which is open and exposed to dirty water should be destroyed.

### **THROW IT OUT:**

- Fruits and vegetables
- Damaged canned goods (dents, leakers, swollen)
- Products with screw-on lids & crimp caps (ie. Pickles, cheese spread, beer & wine)
- All home canned goods (ie. Jams, jellies, sauces)
- Packaged goods (ie. Paper, plastic, cloth, cardboard – bottles, boxes or plastic containers)

### **SAVE:**

- Undamaged commercial canned goods
- Clean containers with a brush in hot soapy water
- Sanitize in a chlorine solution for 10 minutes (1 capful of bleach in 4.5 litres/1 gallon of water)

Due to health concerns, foods requiring refrigeration which are left above 41 degrees F/5 degrees C. for more than 4 hours must be discarded.

Food utensils and equipment subject to flood waters should be thoroughly washed and sterilized before using. Sterilize items by boiling or by immersion in a chlorine bleach solution.