

FLOODING PRECAUTIONS

Entering Damaged Buildings – If there are any doubts about the safety of a building that has been flooded, **do not enter it**. Seek professional advice first.

When you do enter a damaged building, check it for buckled walls, loose bricks, cracks, or any shifting of the foundation.

Do not pump flooded basements out too quickly because the water-saturated ground around the basement could push the walls in.

Follow the instructions of your utility company concerning the restoration of gas or electrical service.

Salvaging Damaged Foods – To prevent diarrheal diseases and dysentery, the following items should be destroyed if they have been exposed to flood waters:

Fresh meats and poultry.

Prepared and processed foods.

Home-canned foods.

Medicines and cosmetics.

Packages that are not hermetically sealed (*airtight*), including flour, packaged frozen foods, and other commodities in soft-sided paper containers.

Throw out foods needing refrigeration if the refrigerator has been out for more than six hours. Don't refreeze frozen foods which have thawed. Throw them out if they've been thawed for more than four hours.

Since seepage can carry harmful bacteria into all but airtight containers, the contents of crown-capped bottles, screw-top glass containers (*including canned foods in glass jars*) should be destroyed. Sealed metal cans, if punctured, bulging, or leaking, are unsafe.

If airtight cans are in good condition, they can be salvaged, but they **must** be carefully cleaned and **disinfected before using the contents**.

Follow this procedure:

1. Remove labels. Keep the same kinds of foods together or mark them in a way that will enable you to identify them after disinfecting. Colored crayon or adhesive tape may be used.
2. Wash cans in warm water containing soap or detergent.
3. Soak the cans for at least one minute in a disinfecting chlorine solution made by mixing four (4) tablespoons of liquid, unscented, chlorine laundry bleach with two (2) gallons of water. Rinse in clean, cool water.
4. Glass jars must be discarded because filth can get up under the lip of the lid. The National Food Processors Association feels confident that discarding commercially processed foods in glass jars and bottles is in the consumers' best interests.
5. Plastic cookware, utensils, plates, dishes and cups and wooden utensils and bowls cannot be disinfected if exposed to flood water. Plastic baby bottles and nipples, Tupperware, and other plastic containers must be disposed of also.
6. Garden produce that has been exposed to flood water is not safe to eat. Dispose of the produce – even root crops. We can only assume that all floodwater has the potential to carry fecal waste.
7. Home-canned foods are not safe to eat if they have been exposed to flood water. The food should be discarded and the jar rings cleaned and disinfected as above. The flats should be discarded.

Cleaning Clothing and Bedding – Since disease-producing bacteria often carried by floodwaters can remain alive for long periods in and on fabrics, care in laundering clothing and bedding is essential.

First, brush off all dirt. If mud-stained, rinse in cool water until as much mud as possible is removed. Then wash as usual, using enough detergent to keep soil from redepositing on fabrics.

The use of a disinfectant in the rinse water is especially recommended to destroy bacteria. Two types of disinfectants are effective, such as Lysol and chlorine (*liquid chlorine bleach*).

Mattresses soaked with floodwater should be discarded since reconditioning is too difficult to be done at home.

However, foam rubber pillows, if left in their covers, may be washed and air-dried. Do not use an automatic drier or dry cleaning solvents.

Medicines – Discard all medications exposed to flood water and have all needed prescriptions refilled as soon as possible.

Cleaning of Cooking and Eating Utensils – Dishes, pots, and pans that have been covered by floodwaters should be carefully washed and disinfected before use. Wash everything in hot, soapy water, using a brush, if necessary, to remove dirt. Rinse everything thoroughly in safe water, and then disinfect by immersing for one (1) minute in a chlorine solution made up of four (4) tablespoons of liquid, unscented, chlorine household bleach in two (2) gallons of water.

Pots and pans can be sterilized by boiling for at least ten (10) minutes. Dishes with deep cracks should be thrown away.

Personal Hygiene – Wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet or participating in flood cleanup and handling flood-contaminated articles.

Safety Precautions – During the urgency of clean-up time, people are often inclined to overlook proper safety measures. Below are a few reminders:

- Set priorities, accomplish the vital tasks and avoid physical overexertion.
- Regardless of the crisis, be sure children are safe and being cared for at all times. Never leave them alone or allow them to play in flood-damaged buildings or areas that might be unsafe.
- Give special attention to cleaning children's toys, cribs, playpens, and play equipment. Items a baby or toddler may put into his/her mouth should be boiled. Discard all stuffed toys and those that are not easily cleaned or are waterlogged.
- Keep chemicals used for disinfection and poisons for insect and rodent control out of the reach of children.
- Wear protective clothing covering limbs, feet, and hands while cleaning up debris, and wear rubber gloves while scrubbing flood-damaged interiors and furniture.
- Be sure electrical appliances are dry and in good condition before using.