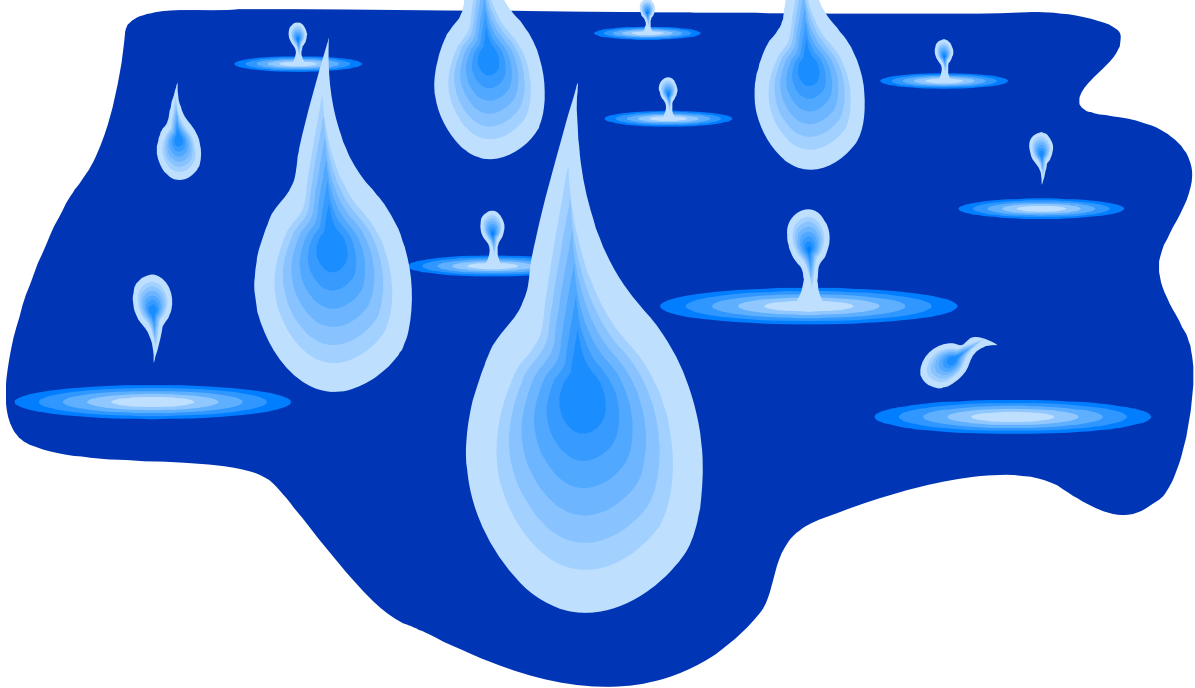


Flood Clean-Up & Safety Tips

from the Franklin County
Board of Health



Franklin County



Board of Health

Safety Considerations

- Don't enter a flooded room (or basement) if there is any chance that electrical panels, switches, outlets or appliances came in contact with the water. For example, furnace, dryer and freezer motors are usually situated very close to the floor. If it appears water has reached any power source in the flooded area, contact the power company and have the electricity disconnected. Rubber boots and gloves do not protect you from electrical shock.
- If the furnace and or water heater have been submerged, shut off the fuel supply (natural gas, propane, fuel oil) to the appliance. The appliance will require servicing before it can be used again.
- Wet surfaces can be very slippery. Watch your step!
- Flood water can carry many contaminants, including chemicals. Be very cautious about entering an enclosed, flooded area without skin and breathing protection.
- Fast moving water may have caused structural damage to your home. Be especially cautious about entering a flooded area if there is any evidence that the walls or floor have been weakened.



Water Damage In Your Home

Water can enter the indoor environment in many ways. Water lines break, roofs leak, sewers back up, basements flood after heavy rains, washing machines overflow and hot water heaters fail. Flooding is always a serious matter, because the water may carry disease - causing microorganisms; wet materials may promote the growth of molds and mildew; and prolonged wetting can cause structural damage to your home.

It is absolutely necessary to dry and clean the wet materials and surfaces immediately to prevent the growth of mold and mildew and to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

Any water that enters your home from the outside should be considered to be contaminated, even if it appears to be clean and clear! Storm runoff can accumulate significant numbers of disease-causing bacteria as it runs over or through the ground. This is especially true in cases of heavy flooding when sanitary sewers and septic tanks overflow, and raw sewage mixes with the floodwater.

General Clean-Up Procedures Following A Flood:

- It's very important to get the flooded area as dry as possible as quickly as possible. Open the windows and use the largest fans that are available to push the humid air from the formerly flooded area.
 - a. Throw away any food that has come into contact with flood water that is not in a hermetically sealed container such as a tin can that has not been opened. Remove the labels and wash the container in hot, soapy water. Dry and re-label the can.
 - b. Food containers with screw threads, snap lids, twist caps and home canned foods cannot be decontaminated and must be thrown away.
 - c. Frozen foods that were not directly exposed to flood water may be salvageable if they haven't thawed out. However, if the food has been sitting at room temperature for more than two or three hours, or if it has an unusual color, texture or odor, it should be discarded immediately.
- Protect yourself from contaminants in the water! Wear rubber boots and heavy rubber gloves. Wear old clothing that you can discard when you've finished with the cleanup. Waterproof rain gear offers somewhat better protection.
- **Always** wash your hands thoroughly before you eat, drink or smoke. Some of the bacteria and parasites that could be contaminating in the water cause diseases such as giardia, and typhoid fever.
- If water-damaged materials have to be removed from the house, and the only feasible method for doing so is to carry them through areas that weren't flooded, place large sheets of plastic on the floor to protect the undamaged floor.
- If the amount of water that enters the house is small, and furnishings or stored items are in or near the flooded area, remove them, and place them in a dry location. For example if the basement floods, move everything that was stored there to the garage. If upholstered furniture, bedding, clothing, papers or other soft materials are permitted to remain in a wet environment for any length of time, they will absorb enough of the moisture from the air to begin to grow mold and mildew.
- Upholstered furniture, fabric, paper goods, clothing, bedding and furniture that is made from pressed wood and that have gotten wet are very difficult to thoroughly decontaminate. They will also support the growth of mold and mildew unless they are dried very quickly. In most situations, the safest course of action is to discard these items.
- Rugs and wall-to-wall carpeting must be removed from the floors that were flooded. Rugs may be salvaged if the excess water is removed from them, and they are then washed (if they are small enough) or professionally cleaned (for very large rugs). The rugs should be dried immediately to prevent mold from growing on them. Carpeting (and the underlying padding) that has been flooded should be removed and thrown away because it is very difficult to get the carpet completely clean and dry. This is especially important if the carpeting has been exposed to sewage contamination, or if the flood water deposits a layer of mud on it.

- Concrete or tile floors and concrete block walls must be washed down with soap and water solution to remove as much of the flood residue as possible then...
 1. Rinse the walls and floors with clean water.
 2. After the initial cleaning, the floors and walls must be disinfected to kill all bacteria, mold, mildew and other micro-organisms. A simple bleach solution that contains one cup of bleach to a gallon of water should be applied to all surfaces for at least 15 minutes then rinse with clean water.
 3. Other EPA approved disinfectants can be used. Please read the label for proper use and application.
 4. When using bleach or other disinfectants, make sure windows are open and there is proper ventilation of the work area.
 5. Use fans and dehumidifiers to speed the drying of all surfaces to prevent mold and mildew growth.
- Dry wall and wooden baseboards, and paneling that have gotten wet must be removed and discarded. The water that they have absorbed could speed the growth of mold and other harmful microorganisms, and it causes the material to become structurally unsound.
- Wash non-porous materials (anything made from plastic, metal, or glass) such as dishes, toys, tools, and other household goods in hot, soapy water. Rinse them in a solution of one cup of household bleach to one gallon of water. Allow the objects to air dry.
- Before materials such as drywall, panelling and carpeting are reinstalled, be sure the floors and framing are completely dry and mold/mildew free. In some cases, this may take up to 30 days.

If you have questions about flood clean-up and safety tips, please call (614) 462-3160 or visit us online at www.franklincountyohio.gov/health.



Is Your Water Supply Safe?

Are you on a public water system?

Even public water systems can become contaminated during flooding, so don't assume the water is safe. Contact your water supplier or watch for advisory notices in the local newspapers, radio or on television.

Do you have a private well?

After a serious flood, it is very likely that the water well and plumbing will have become contaminated. Don't use the water for cooking, bathing, or brushing teeth unless it has been boiled. Use bottled water or boiled water to prepare baby formula.