

# ***After the Flood...***

## ***“The Clean Up Process”***

***Once the floodwaters have receded and you are able to return to your home, the clean up process begins.***

### ***Walls***

Wet drywall and plaster are soft to the touch, it is important to wait until the walls are dry before trying to clean them. To eliminate odors, wash the walls with a mixture of one-pint household bleach per five gallons of water. If you encounter an odor problem in a small enclosed area, use dry lump charcoal in open containers to absorb substances from the air.

### ***Floors***

Before your home is completely dry, it is important to wipe down your doors, floors, woodwork and wood paneling with a mixture of mild non-sudsing detergent. If this is done before the wood is completely dry, it will prevent staining.

### ***Furniture***

Wooden furniture should be taken outside to the carport or garage. The furniture should not be exposed to direct sunlight. Remove as many of the drawers and other movable parts as possible. If the drawers are swollen shut, don't force or pry them open from the front. Instead, remove the back and push out the drawers from the back. Clean out any mud and debris.

Furniture with casters or metal caps on the legs should be elevated (use pieces of wood or aluminum foil) to avoid staining. It should be noted that pool tables and pianos very seldom survive submergence.

Upholstered furniture and mattresses soaked with floodwaters are usually damaged beyond repair. Seek professional dry cleaning advice immediately.

### ***Utensils***

All utensils must be scoured; unpolished surfaces may be scoured with fine steel wool. Aluminum may be brightened by using vinegar, cream of tartar and hot water.

## ***Clothing and Linens***

All laundry items should be quickly separated to prevent colors from fading. Items should be brushed and shaken to remove surface dirt and then rinsed in lukewarm water to remove lodged soil. Finally, items should be washed with a mild detergent in lukewarm water and dried in the sunlight. Consider the use of professional laundries if they are available.

If an item is marked "dry clean only," allow it to dry slowly, away from direct heat. Before you send the article to the dry cleaners brush and vacuum loose dirt from the article.

Mildew is another item you might have to deal with. As sun and air will retard mold growth, items affected by mildew should be treated outside. First of all, the loose mold should be brushed and vacuumed off all of the affected items. If mildew remains, sponge lightly with thick soap suds using as little water as possible. Wipe with a clean, damp cloth and then wipe the fabric with a cloth wrung out in a solution of one cup rubbing alcohol to one cup of water.

## ***Food***

Discard all food exposed to flood water except those sealed in metal cans. After removing labels from cans, wash them in soap and water, then immerse in a solution of water and bleach for at least two minutes. Replenish solution regularly.

## ***Appliances, Motors and Furnaces***

It is advisable to have motors, pumps, washing machines, televisions, radios and other household equipment inspected and reconditioned by an experienced electrician. Refrigerators, stoves and ovens should be thoroughly cleaned and deodorized using one teaspoon of baking soda to one quart of water.

## ***Books***

Store saturated books in a freezer or frozen food locker for "freeze drying." This will dry the books with minimal damage and prevent mildew. If you are unable to "freeze dry" books, stand them on end with pages separated. Sprinkle cornstarch or talcum powder between the pages. After drying for a period of time, close the books and stack them to press the pages. Brush off the excess cornstarch or talcum and just before the pages are completely dry, apply a little heat between the pages.