

Returning to Flood Damaged Homes or Buildings



Dangers are not over after the water goes down. Flood hazards, such as a weakened foundation, exposed electrical wires or contaminated floodwater are not always visible. Keep the following safety tips in mind.

Before entering a building

- Check the outside of the building. Call the electric/gas company immediately if you find downed power lines or suspect a gas leak.
- Look for outside damage. Examine the foundation for cracks or other damage. Look at porch roofs and overhangs. Look for gaps between the steps and the house. If you see damage, have a building inspector check the house before you enter.
- If the door sticks at the top it could mean the ceiling is ready to fall. Enter the building carefully. If you force the door open, stand outside the doorway clear of possible falling debris.

After entering a building

- Look before you step. 1) Floors and stairs can be very slippery. 2) Be alert for gas leaks; do not strike a match or use an open flame. 3) Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. 4) Turn off the electricity. Even if the power company has turned off electricity to the area, be sure to shut the power off in your home. 5) Do not use appliances or motors that were wet, unless they have been taken apart, cleaned and dried. 6) Look for exposed wires. 7) Watch for small animals that have been flooded out of their homes. 8) Watch for snakes. Use a stick to carefully move or turn items over and scare them away.
- Drain the basement gradually to minimize further structural damage.
- Before beginning cleaning, shovel out as much mud as possible and hose the house down, inside and out. Flood waters may have picked up sewage and chemicals from roads, farms, factories, and storage buildings.
- Spoiled food, cosmetics and medicine that have been in flood waters are also health hazards. When in doubt, throw them out.