

Clean-up Procedures for Flooded Basements

Source: Lorain County Health Department

Safety Precautions to Avoid Injury

- Never enter a flooded basement unless you are absolutely sure the **electricity has been turned off**.
- When entering a dark room or basement, **use a flashlight**. **Don't use** matches, cigarette lighters or any other open flames, since gas may be trapped inside.
- **Do not use** gasoline-powered pumps or generators indoors or in a confined space. Gasoline engines emit deadly carbon monoxide exhaust fumes.
- **Tetanus shots are strongly recommended** when working around polluted floodwaters.
- If furniture or other household items are being thrown out because of sewage or chemical pollution, tag or otherwise **indicate they are contaminated before placing them on the curb for collection**.
- **NEVER MIX BLEACH WITH AMMONIA – THE FUMES PRODUCED TOGETHER ARE TOXIC.**
- Call your insurance company and take photos or videotape for insurance claims and tax deductions. Keep records of all expenses.

Clean-up Instructions – After Water Recedes

- Wear protective clothing – coveralls, latex gloves, protective eyeglasses, rubber boots and a face mask, if available.
- Move items out of the flooded area as soon as possible.
- Allow wet items to air-dry as quickly as possible to prevent rot and mildew.
- Open doors and windows. If your furnace or air conditioner is safe to use, turn it on to assist in drying. Also use fans and dehumidifiers, if possible.
- Remove all toxic chemicals such as pesticides from the flooded area to prevent further pollution and the mixing of chemicals.
- Wash down concrete or brick walls, floors, faucets, etc. that have been under water, first with clean water, then soapy warm water. Sweep water down the drain or to the sump pump, and then vacuum with a wet-dry shop vacuum cleaner.
- Disinfect all surfaces and equipment that came into contact with floodwater with a solution of ½ cup of liquid chlorine bleach to a gallon of water.
- A pump-type garden sprayer works best for large areas, or small items can be dipped in a pail of the chlorine/water solution. Let everything air-dry.
- For washable fabric items, brush off dirt and residue before washing. Clean according to the instruction label, in hot or warm water with bleach, if possible. Scrub affected furniture with anti-bacterial soap and water and place outside to dry (weather permitting) or steam clean.
- Contaminated foods should be discarded and beverages in bottles or jars should be discarded, if flood waters reached the lids.
- Clean and deodorize carpets or have them professionally cleaned.
- Foam rubber mattresses, pillows, upholstered furniture and stuffed toys are difficult to clean properly. If in doubt that an item can be cleaned properly, it is best to throw it away.
- Flush and disinfect floor and sump pump drains using undiluted chlorine bleach.
- If your basement is finished with drywall and it became wet, it is best to discard it and replace that portion to avoid the growth of mold. Some wood paneling may be saved if you can clean and dry it properly without it becoming warped.
- Books and important papers may be frozen until you have time to work with them. Place waxed paper between layers and place items inside plastic bags before freezing.