



Returning Home After Flooding

Preparing to Return Home Following a Flood

After a flood happens, many risks remain as people return to their homes and businesses. Many hazards may exist due to damage to electrical equipment, gas lines, or chemical spills. Surfaces will likely need cleaning and contaminated food will need to be thrown out to prevent illness. Use these safety guidelines to avoid more harm after flooding.



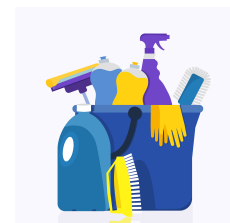
PRECAUTIONS WHEN RETURNING TO YOUR HOME

- Electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks should be shut off to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- Use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns, rather than candles, gas lanterns, or torches.
- If you smell gas or think there's a leak, turn off the gas, if able, and evacuate immediately. Notify the gas company, police, fire department, or State Fire Marshall's office, and do not turn on the lights or do anything that could cause a spark. Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe.
- Your electrical system may also be damaged. If you see frayed wiring or sparks, or if it smells like something is burning but you don't see fire, you should immediately shut off the electrical system at the circuit breaker.
- If you must cross through standing water to get to your breaker or any other electrical equipment, wait for professional assistance from your utility company.
- Avoid any downed power lines, particularly those in water.
- Ask your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators. It is against the law and a violation of electrical codes to connect generators to your home's electrical circuits without the approved, automatic interrupt devices. If a generator is online when electricity is restored, it can become a major fire hazard. Also, incorrectly connecting a generator to your home's electrical circuits may endanger workers who are helping to restore power in your area. Don't operate any gas-powered equipment, including generators, indoors.
- All electrical equipment and appliances must be completely dry before reconnecting them. Have a certified electrician check these items if there is any question.
- Be aware of potential chemical hazards you may encounter during flood recovery. Flood waters may have buried or moved hazardous industrial chemical containers from their normal storage places.
- Snakes and other dangerous animals may have been displaced and be aggressive if they are disturbed. Seek help if you find a wild animal in or around the building or are bitten.



CLEANUP

- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup. Walls, hard-surfaced floors, and many other household surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with hot water and dish soap, laundry detergent, or a solution of one cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that touch food, such as counter tops, pantry shelves, refrigerators, etc.
- Throw out contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected, such as wall coverings,





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cloth, rugs, and drywall.

- Look for mold growth. Mold is more likely to grow in areas after a flood due to increased moisture and high humidity. Mold may still grow after cleanup.

FOOD AND WATER SAFETY

- If electricity at your home has been off for a long time, throw away foods that can spoil (like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, leftovers, etc.) that had a temperature above 40 degrees for two hours or more.
- **When in doubt, throw it out!** Throw away food that may have touched floodwater.
- You **DON'T** need to throw away commercially canned foods, dishes, glassware, metal pans, and utensils. They can be cleaned by soaking them in a mix of one teaspoon of bleach per quart of water.
- Local authorities will tell you if tap water is safe to drink or use for cooking or bathing.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Monitor health symptoms after a flood. You may be exposed to toxic or infectious substances or injury risk during cleanup, viruses spread by mosquitoes, or contaminated food and water. Please consult your health care provider if symptoms worsen.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Read information on safely reentering your home from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- Read a [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) fact sheet](#) on returning home after a flood.
- Read a [mold fact sheet](#) from the PA Department of Health.
- Read flood safety steps on [Ready.gov](#).