



Post Cleanup and Rebuilding of Interiors: A Resident's Guide to Returning to Flood-Damaged Property

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Property that was flooded or had extensive roof damage needs to be cleaned and repaired before you return.

What should I check for before moving back into my property?

- **Structural damage:** Your property, including its foundation, should be structurally sound and all repairs should be completed.
- **Roof damage:** Your roof should have been repaired to prevent moisture from getting inside.
- **Utility damage:** Electrical, gas, water, air conditioning and heating systems and sewage systems on your property should have been checked to make sure they are in good working order. Check with utility companies to determine if there are any limits on service in your immediate area.
- **Debris:** All storm debris, such as damaged building materials and other hazardous objects, should have been removed from your property.
- **Mold:** Visible mold should have been removed from the interior of your property. If any mold remains, please see the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH)/Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Fact Sheet titled "Cleaning Up Mold After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita" about proper cleanup of mold.
- **In the Murphy Oil spill area:** Visible oil should be removed from both the exterior and the interior of your property.

If my property is structurally sound and it flooded or had roof damage, what cleanup and repairs should be done before I move back?

- Remove and discard all porous items that could not be washed and disinfected (for example: mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings and paper products).
- Gut the interior of your property to the studs removing drywall, plaster and insulation that were saturated with water. Remove these building materials to at least one foot above the

area of obvious damage left by the floodwater. This area of damage may be higher than the floodwater line because of “wicking”, which is the upward movement of water through porous materials to higher levels.

- Clean the inside of your property well with soap and water. Moldy areas should also be cleaned with diluted bleach or borate solution according to the manufacturer’s labeling instructions for cleaning up mold.
- Let the studs dry out thoroughly before replacing the walls with sheetrock, plaster or paneling and insulation.

If you can see mold, or if you smell musty odors or other odors, your property needs further cleaning.

Why is it important to gut and clean your property to the studs?

- The gutting is necessary to remove irreversibly flood-damaged interior items such as sheetrock, insulation, carpets, etc. Cleaning of the interior of your property removes mold, deposited sediments and other contaminants, such as oil, that might have been in the floodwater.
- Beware of the presence of snakes, spiders, insects or other dangerous pests. These pests may enter your property while there are no doors and windows or other structural damage is present.

My property has been repaired. Is there anything else I should do to my property when I am ready to move back in?

- Ventilate your property well after new building materials are used for repairs. Some “new” odors are expected.
 - New paneling, cabinets, carpeting, draperies, construction adhesives and other materials may release vapors that will remain indoors if not ventilated.
 - Many cleaners as well as paint may also release vapors that will remain indoors if not ventilated.

If you have any more questions, contact the Indoor Air Quality Education Service at the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals, 1-888-293-7020.

For more information about returning safely to your property, check the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals web site at: www.dhh.louisiana.gov or contact your local government authorities.