



# State of Louisiana

## Department of Health and Hospitals

### Office of the Secretary

#### Floodwater Cleanup

After a flood, homeowners may need to repair or renovate their residences, but doing so can be hazardous. Homeowners are encouraged to consider hiring bona fide contractors certified by the State. However, homeowners who choose to make some repairs themselves can take certain precautions that will help keep them safe and prevent health problems.

Above all, wear gloves, a mask and safety glasses. Gloves protect the skin from contact with harmful substances and protect the hands and fingers from injury. Safety glasses protect the eyes from flying debris and floating particles. Masks protect your lungs from any dangerous particles as well.

Some of the dangers most commonly encountered while repairing a flooded home are listed below.

- Fiberglass particles from insulation can be irritating to the skin when touched and damage the lungs when inhaled.
- Mold in flooded homes can cause severe infections and illnesses.
- Dusty sediment left behind from floodwater can also damage the lungs.

Long-sleeved shirts and long pants also offer good protection, and rubber boots will protect your feet from cleaning detergents and bleach.

Here are some tips to help with your cleanup:

- Shovel out as much mud and muck as you can, then use a water hose to clean floors and walls.
- To remove mold, mix one cup of bleach with one gallon of water. Wash the item with the solution and scrub rough surfaces with a stiff brush. Rinse the object with plain water and allow the object to dry. Open doors and windows to get plenty of ventilation.
- Drywall that has been wet must be replaced. Otherwise, mold and mildew will continue to grow.
- Plaster may not need replacement but will take a long time to dry. Do not repaint plaster until it is completely dry.
- Sagging plaster or drywall usually means water entered your home through the wall or roof. Be careful, as water-saturated plaster and drywall are heavy and dangerous. Punch a hole in the lowest part of the sag to allow water to start draining. Punch several more holes and after all water has drained, begin tearing the drywall out.
- Remove any pictures, mirrors, etc. hanging on walls that have become wet.
- Water may be trapped in walls and must be drained. First, remove the floor molding baseboard, then use a cordless drill to make a hole two inches above the floor between studs, which are usually 16 inches apart from each other. You can use a stud finder to confirm this distance.
- Wet insulation must be replaced.
- Throw out wet bedding, pillows and cushions.

- Ductwork and electrical conduits and junction boxes should be cleaned and dried.
- Floor coverings such as rugs and carpet must be removed to allow floors to dry. Dehumidifiers and window air conditioners will lower humidity levels and quicken the drying process. Only use central heat or central air conditioning if the ductwork was not flooded.
- Do not try to refinish wood floors as soon as they seem dry. Wood beneath the flooring will take longer to dry.
- Drying wood furniture too quickly can cause the wood to warp or split.
- Water-damaged documents and books can be put in plastic bags and placed in a freezer to prevent mildew and prevent further damage until you have time to dry and clean them properly.
- Consider using a professional conservator for valuable items, including artwork.