Prevent Illness after a Flood

INFECTIOUS ORGANISMS AND BACTERIA

Many contaminants and other hazards are not visible. Floodwater often contains infectious organisms such as Salmonella, E. coli, Hepatitis A virus, and tetanus. Illnesses can be brought about by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Tetanus can also be contracted by contaminated soil or by water entering an open cut or wound. Be alert to the symptoms and seek help immediately. The symptoms include:

- nausea
- abdominal cramps
- vomiting
- muscle aches
- diarrhea
- fever

SMART CLEANUP PRECAUTIONS

A few basic steps and precautions will help to ensure your safety in the aftermath of flooding:

- Be sure your tetanus shot is current—within the last 10 years.
- Keep a supply of bottled water available for drinking.
- Consider all water unsafe until told by authorities that the water supply is safe.
- Maintain a supply of safe water for bathing and brushing teeth.
- Be alert for chemically contaminated floodwater.
- If the safety of any food or beverage is in doubt, throw it out.
- Seek immediate medical care in the event of animal bites.
- Keep children and pets away from possibly-contaminated areas.
- Keep a first aid kit for treating and disinfection any cuts and abbrasions.
- Keep an extra supply of any needed medications.

Support Building Safety!

For more information about building safety codes and local requirements, contact your local building department below:

Developed and provided by

INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL®

1-888-ICC-SAFE (422-7233) | www.buildingsafetymonth.org

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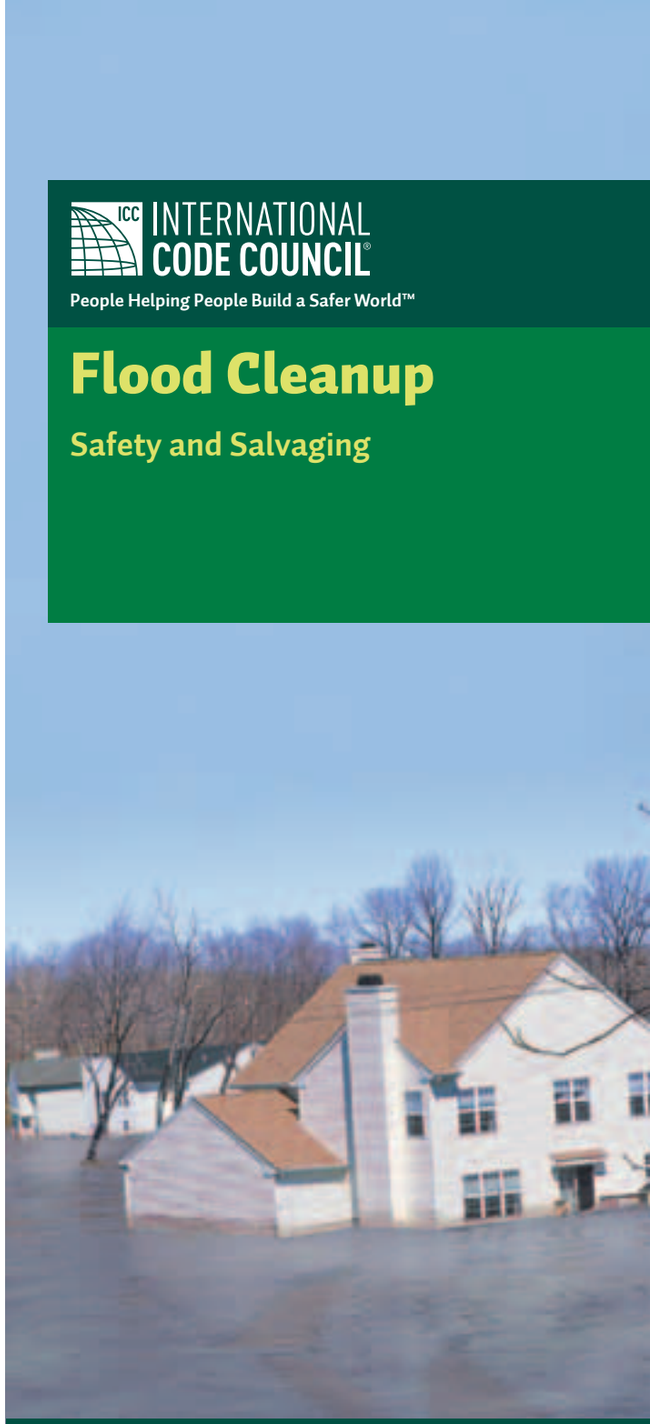
Flood Cleanup

Safety and Salvaging



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Flood Cleanup Safety and Salvaging

During times of melting-snow runoff and torrential rains, rivers and streams overflow their banks causing water to cover the surrounding land. Added to this already-contaminated water are the remains of damaged and destroyed homes, industries, automobiles, and waste material. Before entering an area to begin cleanup efforts, check for downed electrical wires, floating propane tanks, and exposed gas mains. Remember to check the structural safety of damaged buildings before entering.

Tips for Residential Cleanup

- Once the area is safe for people to return, it is time to look to the possible structural damage of residences and the cleanup of yards, walls, floors, appliances, and household contents. After a building inspector determines that the structure is safe, inside cleanup efforts may begin. Before entering and beginning cleanup, make sure that the electricity and gas have been turned off from the outside. Open all doors and windows to remove any gases from the home and alleviate offensive odors.
- All electrical wiring, appliances, and motors damaged by floodwater should be checked by an electrician before any attempt is made to start them. Further damage will result if motors damaged by moisture and dirt are started without proper servicing. Clean and dry all switches, convenience outlets, light outlets, and junction boxes that have been under water.
- Once these items have been cleaned and dried, have a certified electrician check the entire system.
- Walls should be washed from the bottom up, rinsed, and then sprayed or painted with a strong antimicrobial called quaternary disinfectant, available from janitorial or dairy-supply outlets. This treatment makes the walls mildew resistant. Wallboard and wall insulation that has been soaked by floodwater should be replaced and the wall framing washed and disinfected.
- Restoring and drying books, papers, and photos can be a very tedious process. If you don't have time to clean and dry them, place them in zipper-type bags and freeze to prevent mildew. You can come back later to clean and restore them if they are kept in a freezer. Place wax paper between the bags when placing them in the freezer. This will help when it is time to remove the important books and documents that need to be cleaned.

- Cooking utensils should be inspected; those made of porous material (such as wood, plastic, or rubber) should be discarded along with dishes exhibiting deep cracks. Wash the remaining items in hot water with detergent, using a brush to remove dirt if necessary. If any items can be dismantled, take them apart and clean in pieces. Rinse in hot water and then immerse in a chlorine solution, two tablespoons of household bleach to a gallon of water, to sanitize. Allow items to air-dry.
- Clothing and household textiles should be rinsed and soaked in clear water to remove the majority of any residue and then washed in a heavy-duty detergent in hot water and bleach. Use an all-fabric bleach for colored items and liquid chlorine bleach for white and color-fast fabrics. A high-temperature clothes dryer will also help the sanitizing process.
- Flood-soaked mattresses are usually not worth saving. However, if a new, good-quality mattress is damaged, a mattress-renovating company may be contacted for a price on reconditioning.
- Rugs and carpeting should be assessed for damage and a determination made as to whether the items should be sanitized and repaired, or simply discarded.