

Flood Cleanup

Prevent Mould Growth



Floods are one of the most common and costly disasters in Canada. Floods occur when there is heavy or steady rain for several hours or days, which oversaturates the ground, or when rivers or lakes overflow following the spring thaw. Hurricanes, violent storms or dams breaking can also lead to flash flooding. The potential for flood damage is high where there are houses on low-lying, flood-prone lands.



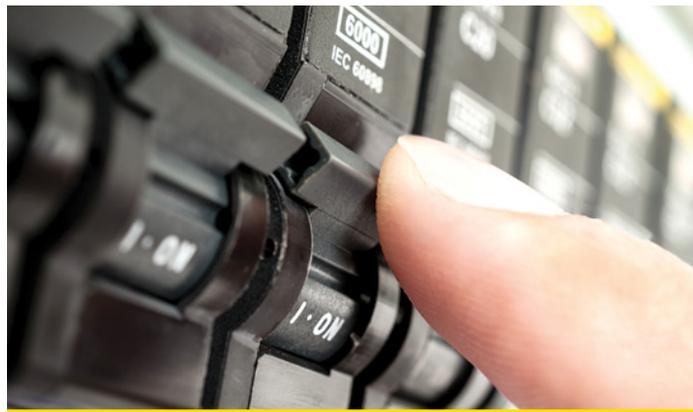
After a flood, it's important to restore your home to good order as soon as possible to protect your health and prevent further damage to your house and belongings. Failure to remove standing water or water-damaged materials can present serious long-term health risks. Standing flood water and wet materials will allow viruses, bacteria and mould to grow. These organisms can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions, and continue to damage materials long after the flood.

Immediate action is important. Mould is less likely to grow if your house and furnishings are dried within **48 hours**.

Before you begin

Put your own safety first. Avoid electrical shock. Wear rubber boots at all times while standing in water. Keep extension cords out of the water. Shut the power off to the flooded area at the breaker box. Ask your local electrical utility for help if needed.

Determine if the flood involves relatively clean water or sewage-contaminated water. You must take special precautions if your house is flooded with sewage-contaminated water. There is a very real and significant danger of infection from breathing the air in an area contaminated by sewage and from handling water and materials contaminated by sewage. Children, pregnant women and people with respiratory problems should never handle water and materials contaminated by sewage. Household items that have been contaminated by sewage, or that have been wet for a long time, may have to be bagged, tagged and discarded according to local regulations. Contact your environmental health officer or community health representative if you suspect sewage contamination. A more thorough cleaning procedure will be needed, as well as greater precaution to avoid exposure of family members and pets.

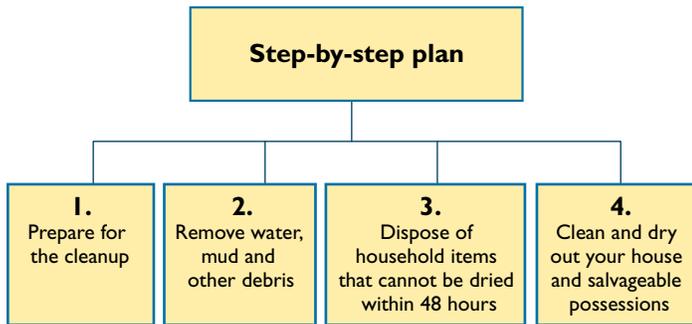


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Here are some steps to assist you during flood cleanup:



I. Prepare for the cleanup

- Assemble equipment and supplies: disposable gloves, N95 mask, rubber boots, goggles, pails, mops, sponges, plastic garbage bags, unscented detergent and water.
- Where possible, open windows and doors to provide fresh air.
- Rent extension cords, submersible pumps, fans, wet/dry shop vacuums and dehumidifiers, as needed.



2. Remove water, mud and other debris

- Remove standing water with pumps or pails, then with a wet/dry shop vacuum.
- Remove all soaked and dirty materials, debris, residual mud and soil.
- Clean any dirt on walls and furnishings with unscented soap and water, removing the remaining water with a wet/dry shop vacuum, then clean and dry all floors as quickly as possible.

3. Dispose of household items that cannot be dried within 48 hours

- Remove and discard flooring that has been soaked by flood water.
- Remove drywall up to 30 cm (12 in.) above the flood water level.
- Dispose of all insulation materials, drywall, carpets, particleboard furniture, mattresses, box springs, stuffed toys, pillows, cushions and furniture coverings that have been exposed to flood water and cannot be dried within 48 hours.
- Identify the materials that may be kept and the ones that should be given priority for cleanup.



4. Clean and dry out your house and salvageable possessions

- Vacuum surfaces that are dry and/or have not been directly affected by the flood water with a HEPA vacuum cleaner.
- After cleaning the surfaces with unscented soap and water, ventilate or dehumidify your house until it is dry.
- Since rapid drying is important to prevent mould growth, use fans, heaters and dehumidifiers as needed to speed up the drying process.

For more information, contact your local CMHC office at 1-800-668-2642 or visit www.cmhc.ca/firstnations.

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