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Flood Recovery

I've been told it's safe to return home. What do I do next?

- Take pictures and videos of the damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance claims.
- Before entering your home, look outside for loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damage.
- Parts of your home may be collapsed or damaged. Approach entrances carefully.
- See if porch roofs and overhangs have all their supports.
- Open all the doors, windows, crawl space vents and access doors. To help speed the drying process, use inexpensive box fans to keep the air moving through the affected areas.
- Understand how to safely deal with electricity during and after storms by reviewing the electrical safety tips posted at [homedepot.com/weather](https://www.homedepot.com/weather).

It's time to clean. Where do I start?

- During cleanup, wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.
- Remove any soaked materials like drapes, rugs and furniture. These items should be piled as far away from the home as possible while waiting for pick up.
- Remove all carpet, curling vinyl and buckled wood.
- Many wet appliances can be saved if they're cleaned and allowed to dry thoroughly. Before trying to restart the devices, have an appliance repair pro check them out to be sure they're safe.
- Submerged drywall can't be saved because it warps and buckles. The paper facing will also begin to grow mold almost immediately. You may be able to avoid replacing all of the drywall in a home by cutting just above the high water mark and removing the affected material beneath it.
- Make sure your food and water are safe. Immediately discard items that have come in contact with floodwater, including canned goods, water bottles and plastic utensils.
- The walls, floors, closets, shelves, studs, and contents—every flooded part of your house—should be thoroughly washed and disinfected. In most cases, household cleaning products will do the job if you use them correctly.
- A good cleaner mix is five parts water and one part bleach. NEVER mix chlorine bleach with ammonia. Together they make toxic fumes. Experts suggest combining chlorine bleach at a ratio of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water to disinfect furniture and rugs.



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- Trisodium phosphate cleans hard surfaces, walls, woodwork, linoleum floors and tiles.
- Consult The Home Depot's Removing Stains Project Guide on homedepot.com for additional inside cleaning tips.
- Outside, dump anything out that contains standing water. Check that your gutters are clean and can drain. Ditches and drains also need to be cleaned so they can carry storm water away from your home.

What do I do if my basement floods?

- Don't rush the process of pumping water out. If the water is pumped completely in a short period of time, pressure from water-saturated soil on the outside could cause basement walls to collapse.
- After floodwaters are no longer on top of the ground, start pumping the water out until it's down to two to three feet. Mark the level and wait overnight.
- Check the water level the next day. If the water level went back up, it's still too early to try to drain the basement.
- Wait overnight. Then pump the water down two to three feet again. Check the level the next day.
- When the water stops going back up, pump down another two to three feet and wait overnight. Repeat this process until the water is pumped out of the basement.

How do I clean my heating and air conditioning ducts?

- Heating and air conditioning ducts that were flooded will have mud left in them. If you don't clean them out, your system will be blowing foul, dusty air that contains health hazards.
- To clean the ducts, remove the vents or registers. If possible, remove some sections of the ducts in the basement or crawl space to give you access to all areas.
- Thoroughly hose out all the ducts to remove the mud. Wash it with a disinfectant or sanitizer, such as the quaternary, phenolic or pine oil based ones.
- If your ducts are in a slab or are otherwise inaccessible, have them cleaned by a professional.



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There is an abundance of mold and mildew. How should I handle it?

- Let as much air and sunlight in as possible. Use fans and desiccants (such as DampRid) to dry out closets and other areas that don't receive sufficient ventilation.
- Clean up and kill the mold and mildew as soon as possible.
- Test mold and mildew stains by washing with some warm water and mild detergent. Ordinary stains will wash out, but mildew won't. If the stains don't wash out, gently sand them out with 150-grit sandpaper. After the bulk of the water and mud are out of your home, you'll need to take care of residual moisture to ensure that mold growth doesn't become a problem. For this phase of flood recovery, it's especially important to wear appropriate safety clothing such as work boots, long pants & sleeves, a dust mask, and rubber gloves are usually called for.
- Inside your home, try to dry water-damaged areas and items within 24 to 48 hours of removing the floodwater to help prevent the onset of mold growth. As soon as the weather permits, open exterior doors and windows to help ventilate the house. Also open closet and cabinet doors in any room that sustained flooding.
- Remove and discard water-soaked items that cannot be cleaned or disinfected, and remove all carpeting, drywall, and fiberglass or cellulose insulation that came into contact with flood waters. This can be difficult, messy work, but it is critical to the future habitability of your home. Using towels, fans and a dehumidifier can quickly speed up the process when drying the remaining interior of your home.
- Clean hard surfaces such as floors, cabinets, countertops, and appliances with hot water and soap or detergent. Use of a bleach solution or other cleaning products designed specifically to remove and prevent mold and mildew is recommended. Standing water under a home can cause high humidity levels inside and cause floors to warp and buckle. Adequate drainage outside, adjacent to, and especially under your home is essential.

Review these Project Guides on [homedepot.com](https://www.homedepot.com) to find tips on repairs that might need to be made after a flood:

- Removing Carpet
- Removing Mildew
- Installing Drywall
- Painting Interior Walls



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Helpful products for flood preparation and recovery:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Filters | <input type="checkbox"/> Pipe Wrench |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries & Chargers | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic Sheeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broom | <input type="checkbox"/> Pliers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buckets & Mop Pails | <input type="checkbox"/> Plywood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caulking & Sealant | <input type="checkbox"/> Portable Generator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning Solutions | <input type="checkbox"/> Pruning Shears |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cloth & Duct Tape | <input type="checkbox"/> Pump |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction Adhesive | <input type="checkbox"/> Rags, Cloths & Sponges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cordless Drill | <input type="checkbox"/> Saw Horse & Workbench |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cordless Screwdriver | <input type="checkbox"/> Screwdriver (Hand Tool) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DampRid | <input type="checkbox"/> Tarps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dust Masks & Respirators | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools & Hardware |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extension Cords | <input type="checkbox"/> Trash & Refuse Bags |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exterior Paint & Stain | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility Knives & Blades |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fans | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Heater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit | <input type="checkbox"/> Wet/Dry Vacuum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlights | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Screws |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grill | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hammers, Mallets & Sledges | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insect & Mosquito Control | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interior Paint | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ladder | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Measuring Tape | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mold & Mildew Cleaners | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nails | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paint Brushes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paint Brushes & Roller Covers | |