

FLOOD SAFETY: AFTER A FLOOD

Flood dangers do not end when the water recedes.

- Flooded buildings may have hidden damage that makes them unsafe.
- Fire is the most frequent hazard following floods.
- Food contaminated by floodwaters can cause severe infections.

You are responsible for your own safety!

Wait until it is safe to return.

- Monitor NOAA Weather Radio or local television and radio stations.
- Do not return to flooded areas until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.
- Do not visit disaster areas following a flood. Your presence may hamper urgent emergency response and rescue operations.

Travel with care.

- Follow recommended routes and heed any warnings. DO NOT sightsee.
- Watch for washed out roads, earth slides, and downed trees or power lines.
- Stay away from downed power lines.

If a building was flooded, check for safety before entering.

- Do not enter a building if it is still flooded or surrounded by floodwater.
- Check for structural damage. Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage.
- Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter tank.
- Do not enter a building that has flooded until local building officials have inspected it for safety.

Use extreme caution when entering buildings.

- Wear sturdy shoes. The most common injury following a disaster is cut feet.
- Use ONLY battery-powered lighting. Flammable material may be present.
- Look for fire hazards (such as damaged gas lines, flooded electrical circuits, or submerged furnaces).
- Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. If possible turn off the gas at the outside main valve. Call the gas company.
- Report broken utility lines to appropriate authorities.
- Check for electrical system damage (sparks, broken or frayed wires, or the smell of burning insulation). Turn off the electricity at the main circuit breaker if you can reach it without stepping in water.
- Examine walls, floors, doors, windows, and ceilings for risk of collapsing.
- Watch out for animals that might have entered with the floodwaters.
- Let the building air out to remove foul odors or escaping gas.

Take pictures of the damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance claims.

Get professional help.

- Seek necessary medical care. Do not neglect minor wounds or illnesses.
- Food, clothing, shelter, and first aid are available from the American Red Cross.
- If the gas has been turned off for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
- Have an electrician check the electrical system and appliances.
- Wells should be pumped out and the water tested for purity before drinking.

Your home is no longer a safe place.

- Throw away medicine, food, or water that had contact with floodwaters (including canned goods).
- If water is of questionable purity, boil drinking water for 10 minutes.
- Restrict children from playing in flooded areas.
- Keep windows and doors open for ventilation.
- Pump out flooded basements gradually (removing about 1/3 of the water volume each day) to avoid structural damage.
- Keep the power off until an electrician has inspected the system for safety. All electrical equipment should be checked and dried before being returned to service.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet.
- Service damaged sewage systems as soon as possible.

When making repairs, protect your property from future flood damage.

- Follow local building codes.
- Use flood-resistant materials and techniques.
- Elevate electrical components above the potential flood height.
- Elevate utilities (washer, dryer, furnace, and water heater) above the level of anticipated flooding.
- Consider elevation of the entire structure.
- Install a backflow valve in the sewer system.