

## After the Flood – Clean-up Checklist

**Do NOT return home until authorities say it is safe to do so.**

### When you first return home after a flood

- Return during daylight hours when it's easier to see problems and hazards. If the power was left on when you evacuated, do NOT enter the house until it has been inspected by an electrician.
- If you see a downed power line or smell gas, don't touch anything. Leave the area immediately and call Manitoba Hydro's emergency response co-ordinator at: 204-771-4042 in Winnipeg; or operations co-ordinator at 204-794-7559.
- Before going into a flooded building, check to be sure the foundation, roof and other supports are safe. If you must force a door open, stand outside the doorway in case the ceiling gives way.
- Watch for buckled walls or floors or holes in floors or ceilings, etc.
- Avoid dangerous debris, such as broken glass and loose wiring.
- Don't touch the electrical panel or use any appliances, pressure or heating systems until an electrician can make sure they are safe. Authorities will let you know when power can be restored to your home.
- Use a flashlight (not an open flame) to check for inside damage.
- Household items damaged in the flood must be discarded according to local regulations.
- Do not use your water for anything other than cleaning until it has been evaluated for the presence of bacteria. Please see [Well-Water Safety](#) fact sheet.
- Your drinking water, sewage or septic system may be damaged. Check with your municipality if you have a municipal drinking water or sewage system.

### Keeping Records

- Make sure you hold on to receipts for all expenses connected to clean up.
- Store important papers in plastic bags in the freezer because freezer doors are usually sealed and they're more likely to stay dry and are less likely to be contaminated by mold.
- Take pictures or video of flood damage in and around your home.
- Register the damage with your insurance agent and municipal staff immediately.

### Clean Up

- Get your house back in order as soon as possible to protect your health and prevent further damage.
- Pace the clean up activities and take frequent breaks.
- Think of clean up in stages:
  - Remove the water.
  - Remove mud, silt and debris (ex: sludge left over from floodwater).
  - Throw out items that can't be cleaned (ex: porous materials)
  - Thoroughly clean and mop all surfaces, floors, walls and ceilings with soap and water

- Dry out the building and its contents.
- Keep children away from contaminated areas during cleanup.
- Avoid contact with floodwater or anything that may have gotten wet unless you're wearing protective gear.
- Consult Manitoba Hydro or an electrician about using electrical equipment for drying, lighting or heating, including power generators – they could be fire hazards if they've been exposed to floodwater.

### **Cleaning Needs**

- rubber gloves, boots, protective eyewear
- shovels to clean up sludge and other debris
- pails, mops, sponges, rags
- plastic garbage bags
- household detergents i.e. household cleaners for most clean up jobs (use unscented detergents if any household members are sensitive to scents)
- disinfectants i.e. household bleach may be considered for cooking utensils, food containers and toys
- big containers for wet clothes and washable bedding, and clotheslines to dry them

### **Other Clean-up Equipment**

- You may need extension cords, submersible pumps, wet/dry shop vacuums, carbon monoxide detector, dehumidifiers, fans or heaters.
- Some generators and clean-up equipment can be rented, so check before you buy.
- If you're using gas-powered pumps, generators, pressure washers, etc., don't put them in enclosed areas and make sure you use a carbon monoxide detector.
- When using electrical equipment, ALWAYS keep the cords out of the water.
- If you're operating electrical equipment in wet areas, wear rubber boots.

### **Hygiene/Safety**

- Provide adequate ventilation during clean up.
- Avoid direct contact with contaminated water and surfaces – wear rubber gloves and boots, and consider using protective eyewear.
- When working in standing water colder than 24 degrees Celsius, wear insulated clothing and rubber boots, take frequent breaks to warm up and change into dry clothing as often as possible.
- Don't rub eyes, mouth, ears or nose with contaminated rubber gloves.
- Don't expose open sores or cuts to contaminated water or surfaces.
- Wash your hands and exposed skin often with soap and water, especially before eating.
- At the end of the clean up day bath or shower with soap and water.
- Change cleaning clothes daily and wash contaminated clothes separately.
- Follow precautions outlined in the [Flooding and Drinking Water Safety](#) fact sheet until you are sure that the water is safe.

### **Removing Water**

- Drain floodwater from your home in stages – about one-third of it daily. If the ground is still saturated and the water is removed too quickly, walls or floors could give way.
- Use pumps or pails to remove standing water, then a wet/dry shop vacuum to soak up the rest.

### **Dirt and Debris**

- Remove all wet, dirty materials and debris to a large disposable container outside the house.
- Open walls and remove drywall, panelling and insulation to at least 50 centimetres (20 inches) above the high-water line.
- Hose off any dirt stuck to walls and solid-wood furniture.
- Wash all surfaces and structures with detergent and rinse well.

### **Heating and Appliances**

- Have an inspector, electrician or local authorities inspect your heating/air conditioning system and ducts to ensure they are safe to use.
- Flooded forced-air heating ducts and return-duct plans should be either cleaned thoroughly or replaced. Otherwise, they may spread mold spores into the air.
- After systems are inspected, keep your home temperature at no more than 4° degrees C. (about 40° F.) until all of the water is removed.
- If you use pumps or heaters powered by gasoline, kerosene or propane, install a carbon monoxide detector. Without a tune-up or proper ventilation, this equipment can produce lethal amounts of carbon monoxide.
- Do NOT use flooded appliances, electrical outlets, switchboxes or fuse-breaker panels until an electrician or local authorities declare them safe.
- Follow recommendations made by local inspectors about parts or appliance replacement.
- Replace flood-affected filters and insulation inside furnaces, water heaters, refrigerators and freezers. It may be cheaper to replace the appliances.

### **Floor Drains**

- Flush and clean floor drains and sump pumps with detergent and water. Scrub them to remove greasy dirt.
- Clean or replace clogged drains or hire a professional to do it for you.

### **Structures and Surfaces**

- Air out or dehumidify the house until it is completely dry.
- Rinse and then clean all floors as soon as possible.
- Replace any flooring saturated by floodwater or sewage.
- Throw out any insulation that has been exposed to floodwater.
- Clean all interior wall and floor cavities with water and detergent.

- Thoroughly disinfect surfaces used for food (counter tops, storage shelves, etc.).
- Use bleach with caution – wear rubber gloves and eye protection to avoid chemical burns. **Don't mix it with other cleaners because it may cause toxic fumes.**

### **Carpets and Furniture**

- Dry carpets during your first two days back at home then clean them thoroughly. For large areas, you may consider hiring a professional cleaner for improved odor and stain removal.
- Remove dirt from furniture, appliances, etc.
- If non-fabric items are only damp, let them dry and then brush the mud off.
- To test a material for dryness, tape clear food wrap to the item's surface. If the covered part turns darker than the surrounding material, it is still damp. Dry until this no longer happens.
- Place furniture on blocks and run fans underneath them. Throw out particleboard furniture, furniture cushions and coverings.
- Dry wooden furniture by opening it up (drawers, doors) and airing it out.

### **Clothing and Bedding**

- Soiled clothing, bed linens and washable blankets (acrylic, cotton) should be cleaned.
- Mattresses, box springs, futons, quilts, comforters, duvets and pillows cannot be adequately cleaned and should be thrown out.
- Separate wet items as soon as possible.
- Scrape or hose off heavy dirt from washable clothing and let them air-dry outside if possible.
- Soak badly soiled items overnight in clean cold water and detergent.
- Wash clothes, linens and washable blankets in detergent and warm or hot water.
- Put washable blankets (acrylic, cotton) through two complete washing cycles.
- Non-washable clothing should be air-dried thoroughly and then professionally dry cleaned.

### **Toys**

- Throw out stuffed toys because they cannot be easily cleaned.
- Non-porous toys can be cleaned by washing thoroughly with soap and water (disinfectant will not work if there is still visible dirt), rinsing and then soaking for five to ten minutes in a solution of 15 millilitres (one tablespoon) of household bleach per litre of water. Rinse well, then air dry.
- Thoroughly disinfect other objects that young children may put in their mouths.
- Use bleach with caution – wear rubber gloves and eye protection to avoid chemical burns. **Don't mix it with other cleaners because it may cause toxic fumes.**

### **Cooking utensils and food containers**

- Pots, pans, cutlery, glasses, dishes, food storage containers, etc. should be washed with soap and water, rinsed well and dipped for 30 seconds into a solution of 5 millilitres (one teaspoon) of household bleach per litre of water then air dry. Since dishes are easier to clean, a lower bleach concentration and rinsing is not needed. Alternatively, after washing and rinsing, everything (except for glasses) can be boiled for one minute and then air dried.
- Cracked, chipped or hard to clean kitchenware should be thrown out.
- Use bleach with caution – wear rubber gloves and eye protection to avoid chemical burns. **Don't mix it with other cleaners because it may cause toxic fumes.**

### **Mold**

- Mold can cause health problems to residents even after the flood is over. For more information about dealing with mold, visit the [Protect Yourself from Mold Fact Sheet](#).

### **Food and Medicine**

- Do not eat food contaminated by floodwaters or sewer back up.
- Throw out all jars of home-canned goods and any damaged canned goods.
- Throw out products with screw-on lids and crimp caps (e.g. pickles, cheese spread, beer and wine)
- Throw out fresh food (meat, fruit, vegetables).
- Discard packaged goods (e.g. paper, cloth, plastic, cardboard).
- The outside of undamaged canned goods must be thoroughly washed with detergent, rinsed, then soaked for 5 minutes in a solution of 15 millilitres (one tablespoon) of household bleach per litre of water, rinsed and then air dried.
- Get rid of any medicine, cosmetics and toiletries.

### **Yard Work**

- Remove any debris in your yard.
- Information on how to remove any animal feces, [dead birds or small animals](#).
- Contact local authorities if there are any larger animal carcasses.

### **Remember:**

**Do NOT move back into your home until local authorities say it is safe to do so.**