

# **Community Re-entry for Homeowners**

## Re-entry for Homeowners

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### Preparing to Return Home

If you cannot live in your home:

- Do not enter the area where your home is located unless officials say it is safe to do so.
- Use caution when entering an area after a disaster, as hazards may still exist.
- Recognize that there may be many tasks associated with relocating and resettling your family. Take small steps.
- Get your family settled – if your home is unlivable, you may want to arrange temporary housing. For further information reference the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization's website on emergency go kits: [Emergency Management Organization - Be Prepared Factsheets](#)
- Take care of your pets – if possible, take your pets with you and ensure they have plenty of food and water. Ask your vet for some options to board your animals if you cannot take them with you. For further information reference the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization's website on pet emergency go kits: [Emergency Management Organization - Be Prepared Factsheets](#)
- Notify people of your temporary address. Give your new address to your employer, family/friends, post office, bank, school, credit cards, utility companies, and insurance companies.

If there is no apparent damage to your home:

- Do not enter your home until officials say it is safe to do so.
- If you are unsure if it is safe, ASK! Reach out to your local authority as they are there to help you.
- Use caution when entering areas after a disaster as hazards may still exist.
- Establish what you need to do FIRST. Take small steps at a time: check the status of your power, water, gas, phone, and sewer. You may need to call utility services for assistance.
- Once you are feeling settled, consider reaching out to your neighbours. It is important to re-establish relationships and lend a helping hand to one another.

### Inspecting your Home and Starting to Clean Up

If you are insured, contact your insurance company. Your policy may cover house cleaning by a restoration specialist. As you go through your possessions, keep ruined furniture, appliances, books, etc. for insurance purposes. You can put them outside or in a shed temporarily.

Household items often take several cleanings to rid them of odours, contaminants or stains. In some cases, they will never come clean or lose their smell. You may want to consult a restoration specialist to help you determine what is worth saving and what isn't.

### **Suggested Content for Clean up Kits**

- 5 Litre Bucket
- Mop
- Long handled broom/Hand brush and dustpan
- Cleaning fluid/detergent
- Sponges
- Heavy duty garbage bags
- Disposable Gloves
- Work gloves
- Dust particulate masks
- Safety Glasses
- Any other equipment deemed necessary or useful to the specific incident

### **Hazardous Materials**

- Contact your local authority to find out how to dispose of hazardous materials such as solvents, garden chemicals, and home cleaning products that have been soaked or that show signs of water damage.
- Perishable foods, foods packaged in cardboard or plastic, or any foods or medicines directly exposed to heat, smoke, fumes, or water may not be suitable for consumption.

### **Removal of Odours**

- You may want to try placing small saucers of vinegar or vanilla around the house to absorb odours.

### **Heating, Appliances, and Utilities**

- Consider contacting a professional prior to using appliances, electrical outlets, switch boxes, or fuse breaker panels.
- Consider having your central heating system checked by a qualified technician before use.
- Contact the appropriate utility or service company to have your service restored (i.e., electricity, gas, cable, phone, etc.) when you are ready to return home, if needed.

## **Floors and Walls**

- You may want to vacuum all surfaces, including carpets and rugs. Consider sealing off the room you are working in with plastic sheeting to keep dirt from travelling throughout the home.
- Consider consulting a professional painter for advice on how to clean your walls. You may need to re-paint with a specially formulated paint.

## **Furniture**

- Remove residual mud and soil from furniture and dry it off.
- If you suspect any mould on any furniture that has been wet, you may want to contact a professional for advice.
- You may want to consider cleaning surfaces (furniture, kitchen cabinets, railings, etc.) with a cleaning solution.
- You may want to get professional advice for cleaning antiques and fine reproductions.
- You may need to provide a list of lost or damaged items as part of your insurance claim. Review your insurance policy so you understand what items to list.
- If you had a household inventory before the disaster, retrieve it for the insurance adjuster. If you didn't, or if it was destroyed, ask your insurance agent for a blank inventory form; it may help to jog your memory.
- Record serial numbers of appliances and household equipment, if possible and note the approximate cost or value of each item.
- If possible, take close-up photos or video footage of damaged rooms, furnishings, and property.

## **Take an Inventory**

Once the inventory is complete, contact your insurance company for details on how to submit the information. Keep all receipts related to living expenses and repairs, permits, inspection forms and any other papers in one place. Your insurance company may request them.

## **Notify your bank or mortgage company**

- You should notify your mortgage company about the disaster and to keep them informed about what is being done to restore the property. They may have forms for you to fill out, and they may want to inspect the property.

## **Basic Needs: Food, Water and Medicine**

### **Food**

- Discard:
  - Food stored in refrigerators and freezers IF the temperature was warmer than 4°C at any time (temperatures may fluctuate during power disruptions).
  - Spoiled food, opened foods, or fire or water-damaged foods like dry goods (i.e., flour, sugar, spices, etc.) even if the package is not open.
  - Unrefrigerated raw vegetables or fruit.
  - Canned food that is bulging, rusted, or dented.
  - If in doubt, throw it out.
- Clean and sanitize the exterior of all canned goods before opening.

### **Water**

- If affected by a disaster, you may want to check with a qualified electrician before using your washer and dryer.
- Consider scraping all heavy dirt from clothes, rinse and wash several times with detergent and dry immediately to prevent mould from forming.
- Never use water you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice, or prepare baby formula.

### **Medications**

- You may want to dispose of all medicines, cosmetics, and toiletries that have been contaminated.
- Medications that are required to be refrigerated should be safely disposed of and replaced to ensure they are still effective.
- Ensure you have enough medication (prescription and over the counter) to sustain you for two weeks.
- If you have concerns about accessing your medications, you may want to consult with a pharmacist or a doctor.

## **Special Considerations**

### **Taking care of yourself and others**

- It is normal to experience conflicting emotions when returning home. Allowing yourself to admit your feelings and expressing them to someone you trust will help you to cope. Try to anticipate what conditions you may be confronted with and how you may react. Thinking through this may help you feel more in control of the situation and less distressed.

- Children have many different types of reactions to an evacuation. They may be coping well. They may become clingy or fearful, have aches and pains or nightmares. All of these responses are expected. Try to encourage your children to express their feelings and fears and continue to provide them with support as you move through this experience.

### **Special considerations for caregivers**

- For people who depend on caregivers, there may be debris on the streets that could prevent caregivers from being able to reach you. This could leave you isolated.
- If you have a service animal, the animal also needs time and care to recover. They may be hurt or too frightened to work after an evacuation.

### **Other considerations**

- Your usual access to health services, such as your family doctor, physiotherapist, home care, and other health supports may be limited.
- If you have a condition that requires a reliable electrical supply i.e., home dialysis, home oxygen, CPAP, or other assistive devices such as an electric bed or lift, or motorized wheelchair, please check to ensure that your devices can operate consistently.
- Your usual ways of getting groceries, medications, and supplies may be disrupted. It may take several days before stores reopen. You may not be able to readily replace even basic items related to your health, including hearing aid batteries and prescription medications.
- Ensure you have an adequate supply (minimum two weeks) of any other health supplies you may need. Access to these products may be limited or unavailable.
- Public transportation may not be working and routes and schedules may be changed. Public and private wheelchair transport services may not be operating.
- Roads may be damaged or blocked. Road signs may be down. Traffic lights and walking signals used to cross the street may not be working properly. This can disrupt cues used to cross the street. Travel time may be longer because of detours and added traffic.
- Landmarks may be changed or gone entirely; home may look, feel, and smell different.