

# Steps after flooding (summary of best lists compiled by a family that has flooded twice) – Other sources indicated in document.

## Five phases:

1. **Get organized**
2. **Demo phase**
3. **Dry out phase**
4. **Clean up and Disinfect phase**
5. **Rebuild**

## 1. **Get Organized**

- 1.1. Call your mortgage company, car loan company, student loan & credit card companies. Ask for a **3-month reprieve from payments**. There should be no late fees assessed. They will work with you. You may need the money to get back on your feet (source HAR).
- 1.2. **If you have flood insurance** call the insurance company asap and start your claim now. Get the reference number. Anything under water is covered. Exceptions would be items that can be washed or stone countertops. Laminate counters can be claimed because they are wood. Also any room that is below grade is not covered. Take lots of photos. Make an inventory of what you have lost.
- 1.3. **USE A LOCAL CONTRACTOR!!!** Lots of con-artists will try to take advantage. Get estimates from a contractor for repairs. You don't need to use that contractor, but the homeowner insurance company needs them. (note – if you have flood insurance you can accommodate higher costs)
- 1.4. You will need the following:
  - 1.4.1. **A restoration company** – that will assess damages, conduct the demo part (or your contractor can do demo also), they will also be the ones drying your house, cleaning it up and disinfecting it.
  - 1.4.2. An **insurance adjustor** assigned by the insurance agent (in case you have flood insurance). The person will be documenting and assessing the damages. The adjustor does not need to be a local agent.
  - 1.4.3. A **general contractor** to conduct all the rebuild work, you will need to rebuild walls, floors, potentially cabinets, maybe electrical, depending on the damage.
  - 1.4.4. If you have flood insurance: you have the choice to wait until the insurance funds the work to get going with the rebuild (it takes longer) or you can start repairs asap and then be refunded by the insurance. If you don't have a mortgage the second option is the fastest. If you have a mortgage and flood insurance, the check issued by NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) will go out to your address but in the bank's name, and you will need an inspector from the bank afterwards to get the money refunded to you. You can request

an advance as needed.

## Inside The House

### 2. Demo Phase

- 2.1. After assessing the damage and taking all the photos, either yourself or the restoration company will assess the water line using a moisture meter (preferably pinless). The tool conducts electricity and measures the water content, as more water will conduct more electricity. Mark the water line and cut sheetrock 2 ft. above the water line. (Please note there is always a natural level of moisture that depends on your area, so the tool will never read zero. Houston stays around 20%. Also anything metal will conduct electricity). Start measuring from the top (dry area) and drag down tool along wall until you see the change. The tool will tell you what it considers as wet. Also consider that sheetrock comes in 4 ft. width, so it may be easier just to cut to that height.
- 2.2. Wear an N-95 mask any time you are indoors in a house that was flooded. I contracted bacterial and fungal pneumonia from Sandy. I was on prednisone for over 2 years. I gained 90 lbs. from prednisone. Otherwise I could have been in the hospital for a few weeks to a month. (Source HAR)
- 2.3. As soon as it is possible, empty your home of items that are destroyed. If it has a plug, it is lost. If it runs on gas or electricity and was under water, it is trash. Cut drywall to 4' (the width of drywall.). It saves time and money when you are replacing it. You don't need sledge hammers. Draw a line 4' above the floor. Cut with a razor blade. Put one hole in the wall and grab and pull. Hopefully you have drywall nails in there and not screws. Remove insulation from that same area. Feel above for dampened insulation. If it is damp, go 2' higher. (Source HAR)
- 2.4. If it has a plug or an outlet and it was under water, DO NOT USE IT. Water and electricity do not mesh. Those outlets will corrode over time and house fires start - even in the future. This is especially important if this was salt or brackish water. Salt will corrode the wiring and outlets faster. And BX corrodes faster than Romex. (Source HAR)

### 3. Dry out phase

Source: <https://www.houselogic.com/finances-taxes/home-insurance/water-damage-home-repair/>

- 3.1. As much as possible, take steps to dry out quickly in order to mitigate water damage and save your possessions. Drying out after water damage should top any cleanup priority list. If you can dry items within 48 hours, you might salvage many goods, and avoid mold and rust.
- 3.2. **Move Air Naturally** If humidity isn't too high, open windows and doors to start air circulating. Open closet and cabinet doors, and remove drawers.
- 3.3. **Move Air Mechanically.** Rent or buy high-powered fans to rev up air circulation. Depending on size and power, fans cost between \$50 and \$500 to buy; \$20 a day

- to rent. (Do not use your central air conditioner or furnace blower if HVAC ducts were under water). Note: if you hire a restoration company, they will bring the fans.
- 3.4. **Dehumidify.** A portable dehumidifier can remove water vapor from the air in a contained area, like a bedroom or downstairs rec room. Shut the room's windows and doors to prevent more humidity from seeping in. Buy a big dehumidifier (\$270) so you don't have to empty its water drawer frequently.
  - 3.5. **Pump Water** A sump pump is a submersible pump that continuously moves water out of the house through a hose or pipe. If you have standing water that is several inches deep, a sump pump can help. Rent a sump pump for about \$44 a day, or purchase one for \$100 and up.
  - 3.6. **Wet/Dry Shop Vac** Some shop vacuums are rated for use in wet conditions. These vacuums suck water from carpets and give you a fighting chance to save rugs and wall-to-walls. Don't use an ordinary household vacuum whose innards are not protected from water. A 6-gallon wet/dry vacuum costs \$50; a 16-gallon goes for about \$170.
  - 3.7. **Remove Sodden Objects** Haul wet rugs and furniture into the sun to reduce inside moisture level. Remove sheet vinyl or linoleum flooring to promote maximum evaporation. Throw out wet insulation under floors.
  - 3.8. **Freeze Papers** To buy time, place wet books and photos into plastic bags and place in a frost-free freezer. This will stop additional deterioration, and prevent mold and mildew. When you have time, retrieve books from the freezer and air- or fan-dry the pages.
  - 3.9. **Absorb Moisture** Desiccants (silica gel, clay, calcium oxide) absorb moisture like a sponge. Place water-permeable packages of desiccants and wet items in airtight containers or in sealed areas, like closets. Some desiccants change color to indicate they are saturated, which can take days or weeks, depending on how much moisture items contain.

#### 4. Clean up and disinfect Phase

- 4.1. Once you are sure you have all the wetness gone (measure walls' moisture) and the walls are down to the studs, spray with bleach. You don't want mold to grow. Make sure your windows are open. Wear a mask. Everything will mold or mildew if not treated. It is not worth your health in the long run. (Source HAR). Restoration companies use a strong biocide. You can buy "Mold Control" (concrobium) at Home Depot. Use a spray. Wear a mask and do not have anyone (animals, plants, food) at the house for at least 24 hrs. when you spray.
- 4.2. Solid wood furniture? Spray with bleach or Wet and Forget from hardware stores. Bleach is less expensive. (Source HAR). You can restore solid wood furniture later. Particle board gets destroyed. This includes doors or Ikea-type furniture (they absorb water and warp).
- 4.3. Washing clothes exposed to flood waters: (source <https://www.click2houston.com/news/how-to-clean-clothes-after-a-flood>).

The American Cleaning Institute has tips for cleaning clothing after a flooding or major disaster.

- a) Scrap and shake off dirt and other residue from clothes as soon as possible.
- b) Prewash fabrics in cool water. Hot water may set in stains. Use small loads with a full water level and allow clothes to rinse and spin dry. \*Don't pack the washer with clothing. Measure detergent into the water, then add water and allow detergent to thoroughly dissolve before adding clothes.
- c) Pretreat: Once you have done the prewashing, pretreat clothes with stain remover. \*To help remove protein stains, such as sewage, grass or blood, add an enzyme presoak product to the prewash.
- d) Wash: When washing use the hottest water safe for fabrics and use powdered laundry detergent. The powder is more effective in removing clay and ground in dirt. Since clothing may have been contaminated with sewage you need to add disinfectant to the wash. You can use liquid household bleach. \*Important note: If your detergent happens to include bleach, this is not enough to disinfect your clothes. You will still need to add bleach. \*Check out rinse water: continue to wash clothes until they are clean. Look at the rinse water and if the water is dirty or cloudy the clothes need to be washed again. If the water is clear, clothes should be clean. Important Details: \*Mildew is difficult to remove and if it's too bad your clothing may be beyond repair. \*Don't dry clothes until you are satisfied with the results because the heat will set in the stains.

For more details and additional tips for cleaning other items in the home check out the American Cleaning Institute.

[http://www.cleaninginstitute.org/clean\\_living/tips\\_on\\_laundering\\_floodsoiled\\_fabricts.aspx](http://www.cleaninginstitute.org/clean_living/tips_on_laundering_floodsoiled_fabricts.aspx)

## 5. Rebuild Phase

5.1. Expect the rebuild to be as any other remodel project. Make sure that there is no electrical or plumbing damage and address before rebuilding walls. Expect that this will take at least 3 months on average to fix. From the time you begin tossing things out to the final paint coat. If you choose to rebuild to be flood-proof, there are material selections included below to help you rebuild for flood prone areas (which will not need to be replaced after flooding):

- 5.1.1. Use closed cell foam insulation instead of traditional insulation, the best guy we have found so far (and reasonably priced) in Houston is Michael Young, EcoFoam, 713-428-8436. Be careful with the contractor as if the mix is not done correctly the house can end up being condemned.
- 5.1.2. After applying the closed cell foam, we replaced the sheetrock using gypsum with fiberglass boards. These walls can be floated and sanded just like with normal sheetrock (you can use concrete sheet also but it would be

more expensive). We placed the boards leaving about a 2" gap from the floor, that way if we flood again we just have to remove baseboard, dry and sanitize. In Houston, the best place to get the special boards is at action gypsum in West Little York 713-896-4002. They have the following brands: Georgia Pacific's Dens armor plus, 1/2" 4'x8' ~\$15/sheet, National Gypsum's EXP Interior extreme, 1/2" 4'x8' ~\$16/sheet

5.1.3. Doors: Our contractor bought us some special doors made with fiberglass and foam.

5.1.4. Floors: We just put tile everywhere, it really looks fantastic and is very easy to clean.

5.1.5. As a rule of thumb, anything with wood (i.e. furniture or doors) should be solid wood, anything else will swell with the water.

5.2. This link shows how to build drainable and dryable walls

<http://www.lsuagcenter.com/MCMS/RelatedFiles/%7BC29620C7-29F3-4F8F-9FBE-169D1A365456%7D/FloodHardyWall.pdf>

God bless you all and keep your hearts open to understanding the hidden blessings these disasters may bring. Alessandra B.