

Hurricane Preparedness Tips – House Flooding

The following steps should be taken before an individual can enter a house after a storm.

- ▶ The individual should make sure there is no structural damage and the building is not in danger of collapsing. The individual should be alert for holes in the floor, loose boards, hanging or loose plaster, snakes or other hazards.
- ▶ If the house has gas service, the individual should be alert for fumes and call the local utility if any fumes are detected.
- ▶ The individual should not smoke or use any open flames until he or she is sure it is safe to do so.
- ▶ No electrical switch or appliance should be activated until the whole electrical system has been checked. The main electrical switch should be turned off by standing on a dry surface and avoid touching the metal handle of the switch box. A piece of heavy rubber, plastic or a piece of dry wood can be used to throw off the switch.

Once it is safe to re-enter the building, the following steps should be taken:

- ▶ Windows and doors should be opened to allow air to circulate through the house to remove foul odors or escaped gas.
- ▶ Don't drink water in the home unless it has been declared safe to do so. Water should be boiled for 10 minutes before drinking it. The flat taste can be improved by adding a pinch of salt. In emergencies, limited amounts of water may be obtained by draining a hot water tank or by melting ice cubes.
- ▶ Destroy fresh meats, poultry, fruits and vegetables, prepared and processed foods, medicines and cosmetics in cardboard containers or bags and other packages that are not hermetically sealed, if they have been in contact with floodwaters.
- ▶ Dispose of the contents of crown-capped bottles and screw-top glass containers, including food in glass jars, if the containers have been covered by floodwaters.
- ▶ Food utensils and equipment which are taken from floodwaters should be thoroughly washed and sterilized before using.
- ▶ Pump or bail out water and shovel out mud while it is moist to give walls and floors an opportunity to dry out and minimize further structural damage.
- ▶ Scrub all woodwork and floors with a stiff brush, plenty of water and a detergent to remove mud and silt from corners, cracks and crevices. Always start washing a wall at the bottom and work up. Starting at the top is likely to result in water streaking.
- ▶ Take furniture outdoors and remove drawers and other working parts as soon as possible. Clean off mud and silt with cold water. Do not leave wooden furniture in direct sunlight because it might warp.
- ▶ Upholstered furniture, especially any which has been submerged or badly damaged, should be cleaned, dried and examined by an experienced upholsterer.
- ▶ Metal should be cleaned as soon as possible. Metal may be wiped with a cloth saturated with kerosene after it is cleaned and dried.
- ▶ Valuable papers, works of art, paintings, etc., may be placed in cold storage to prevent mildew until they can be restored by an expert.
- ▶ Wall-to-wall carpets should be raised to allow air to circulate through it. Draperies and clothing should be laundered or sent to professional cleaners immediately.

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