



## Returning to Your Home After Flood-Damage

Floodwaters can be polluted so all items in contact with water should be treated with caution. Personal hygiene, especially hand-washing, is very important to prevent the spread of disease

### Before you come back to your house

- Contact an electrician or the electrical supply authority before switching power on again if water has reached under-floor wiring or wall sockets or the structure has been damaged by flooding.
- Contact the gas supply authorities if the gas meter has been affected by water.
- Make sure that the local authority health, building and plumbing officers have checked that the building is safe and fit for habitation and the water supply and sewerage systems are safe and working properly.

### Restoring a house after flood damage

Soon after heavy rains have stopped and waters have drained off the ground surface, sewers will generally return to normal function. It is important to clean up, drain and dry out the house as quickly as possible.

- Where possible, take photos of the damage before starting the clean-up.
- Take out everything that is wet and that can be moved – floor coverings, furniture, bedding, clothing, etc. and put them outside to dry when the weather is fine.
- Get rid of mattresses and other large items that have been soaked with floodwater. Foam rubber mattress or pillows may be able to be washed, disinfected and dried in the open air.
- Get rid of contaminated clothing, carpets, upholstered furniture, toys and bedding unless they can be cleaned and disinfected. Items able to be cleaned should be boiled or washed and treated with a disinfectant before re-use. Dry-cleaning can restore other articles of value.
- All electrical appliances that have been in contact with floodwaters should be checked by an electrician before re-use.
- Frozen foodstuffs that have thawed should be discarded. Food in freezers can only be retained if they have not thawed, have not been in contact with flood water and an alternative storage can be found, otherwise they should be discarded.
- Any foodstuff that is not in a waterproof container and has been covered in floodwater should be discarded. Food stored in bottles and jars with crown caps that have been under floodwater should be discarded.

- Check for trapped water and mud in wall cavities, as well as under shower trays, baths, benches and bottom shelves. You may have to chisel out some bricks at the bottom of brick veneer walls. Remove skirting, if necessary, and cut out softened plasterboard in damaged areas. (Consult an expert such as an insurance assessor or builder).
- Use heaters (e.g. hot air blowers for under-floor space), but open all doors and windows.
- Replace wall linings, floor coverings etc, only after things have dried out.
- Leave redecorating for at least three months after finishing the repairs to prevent risk of mould, blistering and peeling.
- **DO NOT** light fires in brick fireplaces for at least two weeks, and then use only small fires until the firebricks have dried out.
- Consult an engineer if there are signs that the house has moved on its foundations, eg, buckled floors, new cracks in walls, out of shape doorframes.

**It is recommend that you approach your insurance company about damaged goods before disposing of them.**

## **Cleaning out a basement after flooding**

- Check all floor drains in the basement to see that they are clear of debris and drain any surface pools under the house by pumping or bailing away water. Try to increase the airflow to speed drying.
- Wash or flush down walls, shelves and floors with clear water and sweep to remove contaminated water and sediment. Then use a solution of one litre of household bleach in 10 litres of water to rinse down walls, floors and other equipment. Leave on for 30 minutes before rinsing with clean water. Keep windows open during this treatment and wear protective clothing. Follow this with a wash of hot water and soap or dishwashing detergent for the final clean up of walls, floors, cupboards etc.
- Ventilate the area by opening all windows or use fans, if power is available. Use a commercial deodoriser, if necessary, to remove any remaining smells.

### **LISTEN TO YOUR RADIO FOR INSTRUCTIONS, INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

**Please contact the Environmental Health Officer at your local Council for further information, or a Health Protection Officer at Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service on 0800 221 555.**

**Welfare concerns can be directed to your local Civil Defence office at the local Council.**