



Iowa Department of Public Health Division of Environmental Health

Reentering Your Flooded Home

Overview: When returning to a home that's been damaged by natural disasters like tornadoes, and floods, be aware that your house may contain hazards, which can cause health risks for your family.

When You First Reenter Your Home

- If you have standing water in your home, turn off the main power to your home if you can do it from a dry location. **NEVER turn power on or off yourself or use an electrical tool or appliance while standing in water: Call your power company or have an electrician disconnect your power from the outside.**
- Have an electrician check the house's electrical system before turning the power on again.
- If the house has been closed up for several days, enter briefly to open doors and windows to let the house air out for awhile (at least 30 minutes) before you stay for any length of time.
- If your home has been flooded and has been closed up for several days, presume your home has been contaminated with mold. (See "Frequently Asked Questions About Mold")
- If your home has been flooded, it also may be contaminated with sewage or chemicals. (See "Cleaning and Disinfecting After a Flood")

Dry Out Your House

If flood or storm water has entered your home, dry it out as soon as possible. Follow these steps:

- Use a wet-dry vacuum (or the vacuum function of a carpet steam cleaner), and electric-powered water transfer pump, or sump pump to remove standing water. If you are operating equipment in wet areas, be sure to wear rubber boots.
- If electricity is unavailable, you can use a portable generator to power equipment to remove standing water.
- **If you must use a gasoline-powered pump, generator, pressure washer, or any other gasoline-powered tools, never operate the gasoline engine inside a home, basement, garage, carport, porch, or other enclosed or partially enclosed structures, even if the windows and doors are open. Improper use can create dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide and cause carbon monoxide poisoning.**
- If weather permits, open windows and doors of the house to aid in the drying out process.

Dry Out Your House (Cont.)

- Use fans and dehumidifiers to remove excess moisture. Fans should be placed at a window or door to blow the air out of the structure rather than in.
- Have your home heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system checked and cleaned by a professional who is experienced in mold clean-up **before you turn it on.** If the HVAC system was flooded with water, turning on the mold-contaminated HVAC system can spread mold throughout the house. Professional cleaning will remove the mold and prevent later mold growth. When the service determines that your system is clean and if it is safe to do so, you can turn your HVAC system on and use it to help remove excess moisture from your home.
- Prevent water outdoors from reentering your home. For example, gutters should be kept free of debris; rain water from gutters or the roof should drain away from the house; the ground around the house should slope away from the house to keep basements and crawl spaces dry.
- Ensure that crawl spaces in basements have proper drainage to limit water seepage. Ventilate to allow the area to dry out.

Source: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/pdf/reenterfloodedhome.pdf>