

What to do after a flood

Overview

After flood waters are gone, there could be substantial damage to a community and hazards to be aware of when you return.

Re-entry

If you are ordered to evacuate, you aren't allowed to return until authorities have declared it is safe to do so.

You should not re-enter your property if:

- an authority has not deemed it safe to do so
- any part of the structure has collapsed
- the structure is off its foundation
- the main power switch was not turned off prior to flooding

Remember to use extreme caution, especially if there are holes in the floor, broken glass and dangerous debris.

Clean-up

It is important to clean and dry your property after a flood as soon as possible to prevent further damage and reduce risks to your health. Here are some helpful tips:

- Maintain good hygiene during flood cleanup by:
 - Reducing contact with floodwater or anything that may have been in contact with it.
 - Wearing protective clothing like rubber boots, safety glasses, and hard hats.
 - Never use water that may be contaminated, and wash your hands often.
- Keep children and pets away from contaminated areas during clean-up.
- Dry carpets within the first two days, and replace if carpets are deeply penetrated or damaged.
- Clean all interior wall and floor cavities with a solution of water and unscented detergent.
- Mud can be dried and brushed off.
- Move damp items to a cool, dry area as soon as possible. Set up fans to minimize mold growth.

Mold

Mold spores are often invisible, and can cause long term illness. Symptoms include persistent headaches, sudden nosebleeds, or colds. Mold is identifiable by signs of brown,

grey or black growth on surfaces; not all mold damage is visible though.

- Wear a dust mask and rubber gloves.
- Dispose of all insulation material, particleboard, furniture, mattresses, box springs, stuffed toys, pillows, padding, cushions and furniture coverings that show signs of mold.
- Freeze important textiles and documents until you have time to treat them.

Plastic and hardwood items may be saved. Let wet mold dry, then brush it off outdoors, and disinfect. Washable items can also be saved. Disinfect by lightly misting each item with a cleaner (e.g. rubbing alcohol or chlorine bleach; use 1 part cleaner to 4 parts water).

Supplies

- Protective gear
- Pails, mops and squeegees
- Plastic garbage bags and large containers
- Unscented detergent, chlorine bleach or rubbing alcohol
- Equipment such as extension cords, water pumps, shop vacuums, carbon monoxide detectors, dehumidifiers, fans, and heaters

If your property has signs of mold, stay safe by finding alternate housing.

Water usage

- Check local water advisories. Do not use water from the local supply unless it is declared safe by authorities.
- Do not drink water if it shows signs of contamination, such as colour, odour, or taste.
- Standing water should be drained slowly and in stages. Use pumps or pails to remove, then a wet/dry shop vacuum to clean up the rest.
- Contact your local or provincial health authority for instructions on how to disinfect and restore wells and cisterns.

Property assessment

Heating and appliances

- Do not heat your property to more than 4°C/40°F until after all the water is gone.

- Do not use any appliances or electrical systems, or touch electric panels, until all components have been thoroughly cleaned, dried and inspected by a qualified electrician.
- Buy and install a carbon monoxide sensor if you plan to use pumps or heaters powered by gasoline, kerosene or propane during clean up.
- Clean or replace soaked or damaged parts, such as filters, ducts, and electrical components, in the furnace and hot water tank.

Food and medicine

- Thoroughly wash and disinfect all undamaged food, medicine, and supplies.
- Dispose of all food, medicine, cosmetics and toiletries that made contact with flood water.

Financial preparedness

- Speak to an insurance agent about your specific needs.
- Prepare a [detailed list](#) of all your belongings.
- Know the [7 steps](#) for making a home insurance claim.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada is ready to answer your questions. Connect with them by email at askibcwest@ibc.ca or by telephone [1-844-227-5422](tel:1-844-227-5422). For more information on insurance preparedness visit ibc.ca.

Recovery assistance

The Government of Alberta and your local government have a responsibility to help a community through recovery from a disaster or major emergency. Some examples of support are:

- Programs, grants, and tax incentives that support reconstruction
- Financial assistance through programs such as the Disaster Recovery Program
- Arrange for the availability of insurance services
- Work with the local community to provide advice and the coordination of provincial support

Your local government is responsible for administering provincial recovery funds, and for ensuring overall support after a disaster.

For more information on disaster recovery, visit Alberta.ca. Please note, provincial programs are never guaranteed and are not a supplement for private insurance.

For more information

Read our other fact sheets on:

- Disaster Recovery Program information for Homeowners and residential tenants, not-for-profit and cooperatives, and Agriculture and farming operations
- Flood preparedness

You can find more information about preparedness through Alberta.ca, or by contacting your community's Director of Emergency Management.