

# Returning Home After a Flood

---

Release Date: May 21, 2021

Flooding is terrifying, and even after the immediate threat has passed, the conditions created by a flood can be dangerous and stressful to navigate. After a flood, you may be overwhelmed with concerns about how to ensure your safety, as well as the safety of your home and car. And there's pressure to move fast, because the actions you take in the 24 hours following a flood can make all the difference. Here are some practical steps to follow immediately after a flood.

## Going Home After the Flood

- If you evacuated, return to your home only after local authorities have said it is safe to do so.
- Avoid driving through flooded areas and standing water. As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- Avoid wading in floodwater, which can be contaminated and contain dangerous debris. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.
- Upon entering the building, do not use matches, cigarette lighters or any other open flames, since gas may be trapped inside. Instead, use a flashlight to light your way.
- Be aware of the risk of electrocution in your home. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. Turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock if it is safe to do so.

## Water Safety

- Do not drink flood water, or use it to wash dishes, brush teeth, or wash/prepare food. Drink clean, safe water.
- Listen for boil water advisories. Local authorities will let you know if your water is safe for drinking and bathing.
- During a water advisory, use only bottled, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking, etc.
- When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away any food and bottled water that comes/may have come into contact with floodwater



## Call Your Insurance Agent to Start a Claim

- National Flood Insurance Program claims do not require a disaster declaration.
- Take pictures of the damage in your home and any items that were destroyed for your insurance claim.
- Homeowners may want to temporarily store items outside of the home until insurance claims can be filed. See [FloodSmart | How to Document Flood Damage Insurance Claims](#).
- For more information on your flood insurance claim, view the NFIP Claims Handbook at [FINAL\\_Claims Handbook F-687\\_9\\_28\\_17\\_Final\\_r2 \(fema.gov\)](#).

## Cleaning - Center for Disease Control Guidance

- See [Practice safe cleaning](#). Remove and throw out drywall and insulation that was contaminated with floodwater or sewage. Throw out items that cannot be washed and cleaned with a bleach solution: mattresses, pillows, carpeting, carpet padding, and stuffed toys.
- Save samples or swatches of carpeting, wallpaper, furniture upholstery, window treatments and other items where the type and quality of material may impact the amount payable on your insurance claims.
- Wear heavy work gloves, protective clothing and boots during clean up and use appropriate face coverings or masks if cleaning [mold or other debris](#).
- People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.
- You may need a permit before starting repairs on your home. Contact your local city or parish offices.

## Other Dangers

- Be aware that snakes and other animals may be in your house.
- Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Use generators or other gasoline-powered machinery outdoors at least 20 feet from any doors, windows, or vents. If you use a pressure washer, be sure to keep the engine outdoors and 20 feet from windows, doors, or vents as well. Never run your car or truck inside a garage that is attached to a house even with the garage door open.
- The initial damage caused by a flood is not the only risk. Standing floodwater can also spread [infectious diseases](#), bring chemical hazards, and cause



injuries.

Look for more information on flood recovery at [Coping with a Flood \(la.gov\)](#), [Floods | Ready.gov](#), and [Flood Safety Tips \(cdc.gov\)](#),

To speak with a Community Education and Outreach (CEO) Specialist about ways to clean up after a flood, call 1-833-FEMA-4US or send an email to [FEMA-LAmit@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-LAmit@fema.dhs.gov).

To learn more about how to prepare for flood and wind events from an insurance point of view, citizens can register for an upcoming GOHSEP webinar: *Insurance Edition, How to Prepare for Hurricane Season* on Wednesday, May 26 at 1:30 p.m. Register at [https://gohsep-la.gov.zoom.us/WEBINAR/REGISTER/WN\\_1MCUXAVMT9QV2Z3\\_ERGGXG](https://gohsep-la.gov.zoom.us/WEBINAR/REGISTER/WN_1MCUXAVMT9QV2Z3_ERGGXG).

Follow the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at [twitter.com/FEMARegion6](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion6).

