



# Recovering After the Flood

## Clean up Information to Householders

### Before You Start

- Use protective clothing: rubber boots, waterproof gloves. Use a facemask or goggles if you are scrubbing, hosing or pressure-washing to protect your eyes.
- Cover any open cuts, scratches, grazes/wounds with waterproof dressings.
- Be careful with any electrical or gas equipment or lines. Do not switch on electrical or gas equipment until it has been checked by a licensed electrician or gas fitter.
- Keep children and pets away from the flooded building until it has been cleaned and made safe.
- Remember to wash your hands thoroughly after each clean-up session and always before eating or making food.
- Take your time, do not overdo it when cleaning up. You will be under enough stress and strain from the flooding, your health is critical. Take frequent breaks. Stay warm when it is cold and be careful not to overheat when it is hot.
- Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink make sure you drink plenty of fluids.
- As you clean up take photographs or make a list as you go for your insurance claim.

### General Clean-up Advice

- Wash mud, dirt and debris from your house with a hose, starting at the highest point and work down to ground level.
- Where possible, remove all wet items such as floor coverings, rugs, mats, furniture, bedding, linen and clothing. If floor coverings are removed, thoroughly clean and dry the floor underneath before new material is laid.
- Be alert to snakes, spiders and rats that may have taken refuge in your home.
- Begin drying out the house as soon as floodwaters recede by:
  - Opening doors and windows during dry days.
  - Using fans. (Note the Warning below)
  - Draining water away from under the house to increase airflow.
  - Checking for trapped water and mud in wall or floor cavities.

#### WARNING

Do not use petrol or diesel-powered equipment (such as generators and pumps) in enclosed spaces.

Keep extension cords out of water



- Each area affected by floodwater within the house needs to be cleaned, including empty refrigerators and cupboards.
- Mould or mildew may develop if items are not completely dried. Mould or mildew may be removed with a 70% solution of vinegar. However the strength of the product may ruin some household items. Wear a mask when working with heavy mould.

## How to Clean/What to Clean

- **Hard-surfaces eg floors, walls, benches, sinks, cutlery and crockery.**

Thoroughly clean with hot soapy water and disinfect by wiping or spraying surfaces with a chlorine bleach solution (see below) or a product labelled as a disinfectant. Once disinfected allow to dry.

- **Linen, blankets and clothing**

Should be washed in hot water (if instructions allow) or dry-cleaned.

- **Mattresses**

Inner spring mattresses are difficult to treat and may need to be thrown away.

Foam rubber mattresses may be thoroughly washed with a garden hose. A detergent solution should then be squeezed through the mattress before allowing it to dry.

- **Furniture**

Other types of mattresses, pillows or furniture, such as lounge chairs may be air dried in the sun then sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant solution. Consult a local furniture renovating company if you are unsure about their condition.

- **Food**

Throw away any food in your freezer or fridge, any boxed foods, fresh vegetables and fruit. Tins can, bottles may still be used providing they are not damaged and are sealed. Thoroughly clean with hot soapy water and disinfect by wiping or spraying surfaces with a chlorine bleach solution (see below) before opening.

- **Medicines, cosmetics and toiletries**

If there is any water damage to the packaging throw it away or talk to your chemist.

- **Children's toys**

Soft toys or moulded toys with air injection holes should be thrown away. Solid toys can be washed and then disinfected.

### How to Make Disinfectant

To make up a 10 litre bucket (standard size) of disinfectant, fill the bucket with water and then add one of the following:

50ml (1/4 cup) of household bleach OR

8 - 16ml (dessert spoon) of liquid pool chlorine



## Where Do I Dump The Rubbish

Floods may disrupt waste collection services. Contact your local council to find out how services in your area have been affected and where to take the rubbish.

## Waste Water Disposal

If your house is connected to a septic tank you should arrange to have it pumped out by a licensed contractor. (Contact your Local Government Environmental Health Officer for more information) If you are connected to sewer please contact the service provider in your area.

## Weblinks

More information is available 24 hours a day by sending an email to [healthinfo@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:healthinfo@health.wa.gov.au).

Type the following **key words** into the subject line to obtain the information you want:

**Bulk** - Code of Practice for the Bulk Cartage of Water .

**Country rainwater** - Country Rainwater Collection - pamphlet.

**Emergency** - Emergency Treatment of Drinking Water Supplies - pamphlet.

**Filter** - Water Filters - Pamphlet

**Signs** - Do not drink, Health Warning and Treat Before You Drink signs

**Urban rainwater** - Urban Rainwater Collection - pamphlet

## More Information:

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Printed on: 20 December 2010

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