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Returning to a Flooded Home or Business Checklist

Only return to your home/business when authorized by City officials

USE CAUTION

- **Before you enter:**

- Inspect for structural and electrical damage from outside to determine if it is safe to enter
- Check for fire hazards and gas leaks.
- Turn off the main electrical switch. Do not turn it back on until you are certain there has been no damage to wires or appliances connected to the system.

- **As you enter, go slowly and watch for:**

- Weakened floors, walls or ceilings which might fall or collapse.
- Watch for exposed nails and other sharp objects.
- Wild animals and snakes that may have moved in to escape the floodwaters. Allow them to escape through an open window or door; do not trap or corner them.
- If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak, leave immediately, call 911 and notify the gas company. Warn neighbors of the potential problem.
- Be sure sewer lines are intact before turning on the water or using the toilet.
- If mold is present, wear a respirator that can filter spores.

- **Electrical safety is extremely important in floods.**

- Use battery-powered light sources.
- Do not use electrical appliances which have been in contact with floodwaters.

- **Flooded materials are contaminated and may be hazardous to your health.**

- Wear boots and gloves when working in areas which have been flooded.
- Wash hands with soap and water that has been disinfected or boiled. Frequent and thorough handwashing is one of the best and easiest precautions. Don't forget to have children wash, too.

- **Be cautious when approaching sick or injured animals - even household pets.**

- Providing clean potable water and food to pets. Do not use food that has come into contact with floodwaters.
- Dispose of any small dead animals using gloves and a plastic bag.

FLOOD INSURANCE CLAIMS

If you have [flood insurance](#), contact your insurance adjuster immediately.

- Begin cleanup and drying as soon as possible. Do not wait for adjuster. Take photos for use as an inventory. All steps suggested on this page can be taken before an adjuster arrives.
- Clean the house so the adjuster can see the damage.
- Keep damaged materials for proof of loss.
- Leave a phone number where you can be reached when the adjuster arrives.
- The adjuster will assess damages to the house. The owner should sign a proof of loss statement. Additional damage can be added when found.
- Contact governmental offices for information.

CLEANING A HOME EXPOSED TO FLOODWATER

- Caution: Never mix chlorine bleach with ammonia or vinegar.
- Clean walls, floors and other surfaces with soap and water. Disinfect with a solution of one cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Be sure to disinfect areas in which food is stored or prepared, such as countertops, pantry shelves, refrigerator walls and shelves.
- Thoroughly wash and disinfect all dishes, utensils, and food preparation equipment.
- Steam clean any carpeting that can be saved.
- If you suspect floodwaters were contaminated with sewage or animal waste, remove and discard contaminated materials including wall coverings, carpets, rugs, and drywall.
- Careless cleanup can do more harm than good by distributing fungus and bacteria which can grow on wet materials to other areas of the building and into heating and ventilation systems.

Electrical Systems

Be sure all electric and gas services are turned off before entering the premises for the first time.

- Disconnect the main switch and all circuits.
- Remove covers from all outlets and the fuse or breaker boxes; flush with clean water.
- Let dry, and spray with contact cleaner/lubricant.
- Have an electrician check for grounds and other unsafe conditions before reconnecting the system.

Food & Water

- Water:** San Jose Water Co. has determined that the water is safe to drink.
- Food:** Undamaged, commercially-prepared foods in all-metal cans or retort pouches can be saved if you remove the labels, thoroughly wash the cans, rinse them, and then disinfect them with a sanitizing solution consisting of 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of potable water. Finally, re-label containers that had the labels removed, including the expiration date, with a marker. Food containers with screw caps, snap lids, flip caps, twist caps and home-canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they cannot be disinfected.
- Utensils:** Discard flood-contaminated wooden cutting boards and wooden spoons, plastic utensils, baby bottles, nipples, and pacifiers. Thoroughly wash metal and ceramic pans, utensils, and dishes with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling them or by immersing for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tsp chlorine bleach/quart water.

Furnishings and Carpets

Remove all furniture, bedding, and carpeting to outdoors to be cleaned and dried or discarded.

- Flooded carpets and rugs are best replaced since flood water may contain contaminants. Flooded carpet pads should always be discarded and replaced.
- Remove water-logged rugs, carpets, and pads within 48 hours after flooding subsides.
- If salvage is attempted, spread out rugs and carpets outdoors. Hose off. If soiled, professionally clean or work in carpet shampoo with a broom. Rinse well with a solution of 1 gallon water and 2 tablespoons liquid household chlorine bleach to sanitize (if colorfast). If carpet is wool, do not add bleach.
- Dry the carpet and subfloor thoroughly as quickly as possible. If carpet is installed damp, it can mildew.
- Carpet might shrink, but a professional may be able to stretch it.
- All upholstered furniture and mattresses contaminated by flood water should be discarded. If an upholstered furniture piece is valuable, the stuffing and upholstery will need to be replaced. Solid wood, metal and plastic furniture may be cleaned and restored. Hose off any mud, clean, sanitize and let dry completely out of direct sunlight.

Walls

- Open flooded walls, even if they appear undamaged, to prevent mold, odor, and structural decay later.
- Remove water from the structure as rapidly as possible. Ventilate.
- Remove baseboards, and cut holes in wallboard to drain uninsulated walls.
- Remove the interior surface of insulated walls to a point above water height. Discard flooded drywall.
- Undamaged paneling may be propped open or reinstalled after cleaning.
- Remove and discard all wet fibrous insulation.
- Clean out mud. Wall studs and plates may be sprayed with disinfectant (1 cup bleach/gallon water) to kill any existing mold and fungi.
- Speed dry with dehumidifiers and fans.
- Leave walls open until they have thoroughly dried, which may take up to a month.
- Select replacement materials that will withstand future floods (such as rigid foam insulation, removable wainscoting, ceramic tile, etc).

Appliances and Equipment

- Clean and dry the submerged household appliance before starting.
- With the electricity or fuel turned off, unplug and open as much as possible to rinse or wipe clean and let dry.
- Tilt to drain and aid quick drying. Three days to a week is necessary for drying.
- Appliance repair professionals should inspect before reconnecting. Many appliances can be saved.