

SEWAGE BACK-UP HOME CARE GUIDE

Your home and its contents may look beyond hope, but many of your possessions can probably be restored. If you do things right your flooded home can be cleaned up, dried out, rebuilt and occupied sooner than you think.

Sewage contains bacteria, viruses, and other organisms that can cause illness unless you take proper precautions. Cleanup should begin as soon as the sewage and/or floodwaters have receded or been removed. The longer that sewage is allowed to remain in your home, the greater the potential for sickness and irreparable damage to your home.

SAFETY FIRST

Before clean up, decide what jobs and repairs that you can do or you may prefer the services of a professional.

BE CAREFUL

- Assume anything touched by sewage is contaminated;
- Wash hands frequently;
- Disinfect everything sewage has touched;
- Wear gloves or do not assist in the clean up process, especially if you have cuts or open sores;
- Wear leak proof rubber boots that will keep your feet safe and dry.

BE AWARE of potential damage to utilities (gas and electric) from contaminated water. If you are not comfortable working on your utilities or appliances, call a professional. **Electrocution is a major killer in floods.**

SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Wait for the water/sewage to go down, or pump out flooded areas.
- Report downed power lines.
- Report gas leaks.
- Check for structural damage.
- Turn off electricity.
- Turn off gas or fuel.

CLEAN IT UP

STEP 1: Gather the necessary cleaning supplies.

- Brooms, mops, brushes, sponges
- Buckets, hose
- Rubber gloves
- Rags
- Cleaning products
- Disinfectants
- Trash bags

STEP 2: Sort damaged contents to be repaired or discarded.

Items soaked by sewage... Throw them out???

Usually throw away

- Foam Rubber
- Large carpets
- Books and paper products
- Food

Always throw away

- Cosmetics
- Medicines and medical supplies
- Stuffed animals
- Toys
- Mattresses and pillows
- Upholstered couches and chairs
- Carpet padding
- Cardboard

STEP 3: Clean up one room at a time.

A 2-bucket approach is most efficient. Use one bucket for the cleaning solution and the other for the rinse water. After using the cleaning solution, rinse your mop, sponge, or cleaning cloth in the rinse bucket. Wring it dry. Re-wet your mop in the cleaning solution. Using 2 buckets keeps most of the dirty rinse water out of your cleaning solution. Replace the rinse water frequently.

After cleaning a room or item, go over it again with a disinfectant to kill the germs and smell left by the sewage and/or floodwaters. You may also need to get rid of mildew.

In case of heavy contamination you should spray all surfaces with disinfectant. Physically remove organic matter (raw sewage and silt) by any safe means available. Clean and disinfect surfaces according to the 2-bucket approach as described above. Recommended Solutions:

TO CLEAN

1st Choice: non-sudsing household cleaners

2nd Choice: laundry soap or detergent

TO DISINFECT

10% solution of liquid chlorine bleach (13 oz. in 1 gallon of water)

Household disinfectant sanitizer such as quaternary, phenolic or pine oil disinfectants (check labels)

Do not use chlorine bleach on non-colorfast materials. Do not mix bleach with other household chemical products, especially ammonia or toilet bowl cleaner. The chemical reaction can create a poisonous gas.

STEP 4: Dry out your home and remove mildew by lowering the humidity.

- Open up your house - open outside doors and windows.
- Open up closet doors and cabinet doors.
- Circulate the air with fans.
- Run a dehumidifier.

STAY HEALTHY

Small children, pregnant women and people, with health problems should avoid flooded and sewage-contaminated areas until clean-up is complete. Small children tend to put things in their mouths. Pregnant women and people with health problems need to use caution to avoid injury and exposure to disease.

STAY HEALTHY CHECKLIST

Confirm that water is clean and safe to drink.

Disinfect dishes and utensils and everything else that sewage and floodwaters have touched.

All food exposed to sewage and floodwaters should be discarded except food that is sealed in metal cans. Remove labels from cans, wash in detergent, rinse, then place in a chlorine solution of 1 teaspoon of liquid laundry bleach for each 2 gallons of water, then air dry. Re-label with a permanent marker.

Thoroughly launder all exposed clothing.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

A list of companies that provide special clean up services can be found in the yellow pages of your telephone book listed under "Carpet, Rug, and Upholstery Cleaning."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Forsyth County Health Department
Division of Environmental Health
336-703-3225

N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources
336-771-4600

American Red Cross
336-724-0511