

# What to Do if Your Basement Floods

## Important Safety Information

Because dealing with a flooded area can be dangerous, extra safety precautions should be taken. When in doubt, contact the Platte County Health Department. Please follow these safety tips:

- Because electrocution is always a danger in a flooded basement, wait until the water recedes before you begin cleanup. If you decide to walk in the water, the electricity must be shut off at the main box.
- Since flood water may be contaminated with sewage, wear rubber boots and gloves to minimize skin contact. Do not smoke, eat or touch your face while in a flooded area. If you receive an open wound while working in a flooded area, seek medical attention immediately.
- Do not allow children or pets near the flooded area.
- Remember that flooded areas will be slippery, even after the water recedes.
- In almost all cases of basement flooding, city tap water will remain safe. However, whether you have city or well water, do not turn on the faucets below flood level until the water recedes. If you think that your well may have been contaminated, call the Platte County Health Department. Do not use water that may be unsafe for any reason. To disinfect, boil in a clean container for at least three minutes.
- If a gas odor is present, do not touch any electrical fixtures, telephones or switches – any spark may ignite the gas. Leave immediately, leaving the doors open to ventilate, and call the Fire Department and the gas company from a safe place. Do not light a match or use any open flame on your way out of the house.
- If the furnace or other appliances became wet, have them inspected by a qualified service technician before using them. Turning on wet electrical equipment could produce shock, endangering life and may burn out equipment. Once your furnace is cleared for use, replace the filter with a new, dry filter.
- Dispose of all food that became wet - do not eat it. Food in glass containers can be kept only if the floodwater did not reach the lid, but the jar must be washed in warm soapy water and rinsed. Discard food not refrigerated for more than four hours and frozen foods thawed for more than four hours. If any dishes came into contact with flood water, wash them in clean, soapy water, rinse and then sanitize them in a sanitizer solution. An effective sanitizer solution is one tablespoon of unscented, liquid bleach to one gallon of warm water. Wash in a dishwasher if possible.
- Discard any medicines and personal products that came into contact with the flood water.



## Clean-up Instructions

**The Platte County Health Department does not assist with the cleanup of private property. Please check the Yellow Pages phone book under “house cleaning – interior.” To do it yourself after the water recedes, follow these clean-up instructions:**

- Move items out of the flooded area as soon as possible.
- Allow wet items to air-dry as quickly as possible to prevent rot and mildew.
- Open doors and windows. If your furnace or air conditioner is safe to use, turn it on to assist in drying. Also use fans and dehumidifiers if possible.
- Remove all toxic chemicals such as pesticides from the flooded area to prevent further contamination and the mixing of chemicals.
- Wash down concrete or brick walls, floors, faucets etc. that have been under water, first with clean water, then soapy warm water. Sweep water and sediment down the drain or to the sump pump.
- Sanitize all areas and equipment that came into floodwater contact with a solution of **¼ cup of liquid chlorine bleach to a gallon of water**. Let everything air dry.
- To clean washable fabric items, brush off dirt and residue before washing, according to the instruction label, in hot or warm water with bleach if possible.
- Carpet, carpet pads, mattresses, couches, pillows, paper products, and other absorbent materials should be discarded.
- Flush and sanitize floor and sump pump drains using **¼ cup of liquid chlorine bleach to a gallon of water**.
- If your basement is finished with drywall and it became wet, it is best to discard it and any insulation behind it and replace that portion to avoid the growth of mold. Some wood paneling may be salvageable if you can clean and dry it properly without it becoming warped.
- **NEVER MIX BLEACH WITH AMMONIA – THE FUMES PRODUCED TOGETHER ARE TOXIC.**

**If you have homeowners or renters' insurance coverage for flooding or sewer backups, don't forget to notify your insurance company.**

**For questions, please call the Platte County Health Department Environmental Health Division at (816) 858-2412.**



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