



## Recommendations for Debris Removal Following a Flood

### Priority:

1. Even if power has not been restored to your area, turn your power off at the main breaker.
2. Turn your gas off at the meter.
3. Remove all personal contents from each room that has been affected.
  - a. Much of the furniture made out of hardwood can be saved if dried out thoroughly and cleaned as soon as possible after the water has receded.
  - b. It is important to protect your home from further damage. Resist the urge to begin cleaning and disinfecting your personal items until you have removed *all* damaged materials from your home and placed them in a well-ventilated area, preferably with exposure to sunlight. This will ensure the maximum level of recovery for damaged items.

### Materials to remove:

- All the sheetrock that has been exposed to water. We also recommend, due to the nature of how much the material will soak up moisture, removing the sheetrock 12 inches above the water line.
- All the insulation behind the wall coverings. Again, we recommend removal at least 12 inches above the water line.
- Carpet, pad and any laminate flooring.
- Most vinyl floor coverings should be removed. On occasion, we have found that some industrial floor tiles that have been glued on concrete surfaces weather flooding well, but for the most part, vinyl floorings should be removed.
- Hollow core doors.
- Paneling
  - It is often best to take the whole sheet of paneling off. You may find, depending on the quality of the paneling used, that you may be able to save some of it when it is quickly moved to a well-ventilated area outside with exposure to sunlight.
  - There may be sheetrock behind the paneling also in need of removal.
- Cabinets
  - If your cabinets are made out of plywood, there is a good chance that you can save some or all of your cabinets.
  - In order to get to all of the material that must be removed, you will have to remove your cabinets from the wall.
- Any wall tiles that have been installed onto sheetrock.

- If your ceramic tiles have been installed on a cement backer board, you may be able to leave them as long as there is clearly no damage. It is important to remove any insulation that may be located behind an undamaged ceramic tile wall. The wet insulation may necessitate the full or partial removal of the tiles.

#### **Materials worthy of saving:**

- In our experience, we have found that most hardwood and ceramic floors that have been properly installed can be saved.
- Cabinets that have been built out of plywood or solid wood.
- Wood trim, baseboards and crown molding.
- Walls that are plastered are often very hardy and can be saved.
  - It will take more time for them to dry.
  - After drying, if the plaster hasn't separated from the wood laths, you will be able to repaint.
  - Be sure to check that plastered walls have a way to drain any water collected inside.
  - If there is batten insulation, you may need to remove enough plaster to allow the removal of the insulation.

#### **Once all the water-affected items have been removed, the critical task is to dry your home out:**

- Open the windows and doors if the humidity level outside is lower than inside.
- Fans are very helpful to circulate air.
- Open all closets and cabinet doors so the air can circulate to those areas.
- You may want to use desiccants where getting air to circulate is too difficult; i.e. closets. An example of a desiccant is cat litter, which is made of clay and provides favorable absorption qualities.
- Dehumidifiers work very well.
- Work to restore power to the air-conditioning units, which will help greatly to dry out your home.

#### **Suggestions for the use of bleach:**

- Diluted bleach can be very helpful in the cleaning of your flooded belongings – but remember that it is a very toxic product and caution must be exercised.
- While treating for potential mold spores, we recommend that you consider a product like Mold Blaster. This can be purchased at your local hardware store.
- Avoid reintroducing water into your home when cleaning areas to prevent the development or spread of mold – especially in areas that are constructed with wood stud walls.