

## **Public health advice to flooding affected areas**

### **SEEK ADVICE FROM YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY BEFORE CLEANING UP OR DISPOSING OF ANY GOODS.**

If you need to start before an assessor can visit, take photos and make notes before you begin. Later, if an agreement cannot be reached with the insurance company or you have other health concerns in relation to your home post-flooding, you can seek advice from an environmental health officer. Visit [www.cph.co.nz](http://www.cph.co.nz) for contact details.

### **IF YOU EVACUATED YOUR HOME DUE TO FLOODING:**

Before returning, ensure:

1. That the electrical supply authority has checked the electrical installation is safe. Electrical appliances such as refrigerators, deep freezers, electrical heaters, etc., should be checked by an electrician before using.
2. The local authority health, building, or plumbing inspectors have checked the sewerage system and the water supply

**YOU SHOULD ONLY RETURN TO YOUR HOME WHEN CLEARANCE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE ABOVE INSPECTORS, AND FROM CIVIL DEFENCE.**

3. If you have gas (mains or bottle), that the gas supply has been checked.
4. Please note: In all cases approach your insurance company prior to disposing of any goods or carrying out any restoration on your house.

Assume all flood waters are sewage-polluted, so all items that have come into contact with flood waters should be treated with caution.

### **Check for structural damage**

Has the house moved? - Look for buckled floors, new cracks in walls and door frames that are out of shape (doors may stick where they didn't before, or be impossible to close). Remember to take photos to assist with your insurance claim.

### **Making your home habitable in the shortest possible time**

In most cases it will take months, rather than weeks, to completely restore your home after it has been damaged by flood water. Draining, cleaning and drying out can, and should be done quickly.

First, make sure you use personal protective equipment such as waterproof gloves, gumboots and overalls/waterproofs if you have them. If mud has dried or there is mould on the walls, protect your lungs from microbes and mould by using an N95 mask/respirator. Then,

- Clear out everything that is wet
- Get rid of any water or mud left behind

- Encourage quick and thorough drying by ventilating areas, and using dehumidifiers and heaters if it is safe to do so.  
Don't be afraid to cut out sections of carpet, curtains or furniture fabrics that can't be salvaged – they can be repaired. If you are cutting into gip or wallboards, take special care around sockets or switches.

Repairs should be carried out only when checks have shown the structure of the house is dry enough. Redecorating should never be rushed. Wait until the house is fit to live in, and thoroughly dry.

### **Cleaning indoor areas that have been flooded**

Textile-based materials (blankets, sheets, drapes, clothing, etc.) which can be boiled can be re-used. Any that cannot be boiled should be thoroughly washed with the use of disinfectant or professionally dry-cleaned, after first advising anyone handling them that they have been flood-damaged.

Pillows, mattresses (whether of flock, kapok, inner sprung mattresses and foam rubber mattresses) as well as soft upholstered furnishings, should be discarded after reporting to your insurers.

### **Removing mould:**

Before carrying out the following, protect yourself by using gloves and avoid splashes to the face or eyes.

- Small amounts of mould can easily be removed using a mild solution of household bleach and water and wiping over the surface.
- Wash or flush down walls, shelves and floors that have been submerged during a flood with clean water and use a brush to remove contaminated water and sediment.
- Use a solution of 1 litre of household bleach in 10 litres of water to rinse down walls, floors, other hard surfaces and non-electrical equipment. Leave on for 30 minutes before rinsing with clear water.
- Keep windows open during this treatment.