



After The Flood: Clean Up And Stay Safe

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ST. PAUL, Minn. -- Individuals affected by the flooding that began on March 16, 2009, are urged to begin cleaning up their homes and personal property as soon as possible. Officials from Minnesota's Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) emphasize that it is not necessary to wait for an inspection before beginning this process.

"We encourage individuals affected by the disaster to remain cautious and return home only when it is safe to do so," said Federal Coordinating Officer Mike Smith. "Property owners should document all losses and damages by taking photos first, or making a list, and then begin immediately removing all flood damaged personal property."

Before making permanent repairs to your home-such as drywall, structural components, electrical systems or plumbing-make sure you get the proper permits from your local community or county permitting officials. This is especially important for those living in a Special Flood Hazard Area to ensure compliance with local floodplain management requirements.

"Our main concern is the health and safety of Minnesotans as they begin the clean-up process," said State Coordinating Officer Kris Eide. "It is important for homeowners to get accurate information from state and local officials in order to protect themselves and their loved ones."

The following precautions are suggestions that residents in flooded areas may want to implement:

- **Confirm the water supply is safe to drink.** Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply has been contaminated by the floodwaters. Remember to carry bottled drinking water and discard any food products that may have come in contact with floodwater.
- **Wear protective clothing.** Protect yourself during cleanup by wearing boots, gloves and masks. Clean and disinfect everything floodwater contacted.
- **Ventilate your home.** Open all doors and windows to allow air to circulate and dry out your home. Dehumidify as soon as possible after a flood.
- **Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pit and leaching systems as soon as possible.** Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
- **Make a list of lost or damaged items.** Be sure to include their age and value, and if possible, have receipts for those items available.
- **Prevent mold growth.** Wash all surface areas in the house that came in contact with floodwater. Disinfect and wipe surfaces dry with paper towels to minimize bacterial contamination.
- **Isolate any moldy objects.** Seal moldy trash in plastic bags and remove them immediately. Objects you can save should be dried or frozen as soon as possible. Freezing inactivates mold.

For more tips on cleaning up and keeping your family safe, visit www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/, www.minnesotarecovers.org or the CDC's flood website at www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/.

FEMA coordinates the Federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of safe.

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