

# Re-Entering your home after a hurricane or flood:

Things to consider when your home is approved for re-entry



## PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY:

When officials tell you that your home is safe to re-enter, you need to know what to expect and how to protect yourself and your family from harm. During your first visit you will need to check for damage and plan clean up activities.

Do not enter your home until you are told it is safe to go inside by local officials. Do not ever go into a house or building that is marked unsafe.

Before cleaning up, you will need to learn how to clean safely depending on what you find in your home. Use the checklist on the back of this sheet to mark the hazards you find. Then learn how to handle them by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO.

When you return to your neighborhood and home, please move cautiously and take steps to protect yourself from injury or harm. Remember that fire fighters and paramedics may not respond to an emergency as quickly as normal.

## ① BE PREPARED:

**Buddies** – do not enter a home or other structure alone. Bring at least one other able adult to help you.

**No Children** – keep babies and children away from the home or structure. If you are pregnant, or think you might be pregnant, stay out of the home until health officials say it is safe.

**Better safe than sorry** – senior citizens, people with allergic or respiratory conditions like asthma, dermatitis, or chronic bronchitis, people with cancer or who are having chemotherapy, or other conditions that affect their immune systems should stay away from the home until health officials say it is safe.

**Tetanus booster** –if it has been more than 10 years since you had a tetanus shot than get one before going home. If you don't know then get a booster shot. Without the booster a small cut or rash can be infected or cause serious health problems.

**Sturdy footwear** is important when entering a home or other structure. Waterproof boots with a good tread and steel shank are recommended.

**Protective Clothing** – it may be hot, but protect your skin by wearing long pants, long sleeved shirts and rubber, PVC or latex gloves. Bring extra gloves and a clean change of clothes and shoes in a separate plastic bag to wear after you leave your home.

**Food and water** – bring plenty of bottled of water with you until the tap water is safe for drinking. Bring snacks that do not need to be refrigerated.

**Other basic necessities** are waterless disinfectant hand soap, mosquito repellent containing DEET, flashlight, heavy-duty trash bags and first aid items.

## ② DO NOT ENTER IF:

The building looks **structurally unsafe**. Look for damaged exterior walls or beams, collapsed ceilings, floors or staircases.

You smell **gas**.

You see **downed power lines**. Even if power is not restored, downed power lines present a danger. Do not re-enter if power lines are down and near or on your house and yard.

You see or smell a likely **chemical spill**.

You see an **electrical hazard**.

**Standing water** may be dangerous and hide snakes, electrical and other hazards. Do not touch or walk in standing water.

If the house and yard look safe and it has been cleared for re-entry, enter cautiously.

## ③ LEAVE IMMEDIATELY IF:

You **feel any of the following symptoms**: wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, escalating allergy symptoms, nausea, dizziness, headache, fatigue, burning sensation in nose or throat, or if you get a rash. If these feelings are severe or if they do not go away after leaving the house contact a health care provider (or 1-800-CDC-INFO).

You see or smell structural damage, gas, chemical spill, or electrical hazard.

Mold covers more than 10 square feet of the walls or ceiling.

## ④ INSIDE THE HOME:

Open windows. Beware of cracked and broken glass. Look for items listed under the hazard checklist on the other side of this flier.

Do not touch damaged containers of household cleaners or garden chemicals with your bare hands or skin.

Wear protective gloves before touching dirt and mold.

Wash your hands frequently. If the tap water is not safe, then use waterless disinfectant hand soap.

### **Electrical Hazards:**

Look out for damaged power cords. Do not use an item if the power cord or electrical system was waterlogged, is damp, or looks frayed or damaged. Some damaged items will look okay but be unsafe.

Do not use generators, heaters, charcoal and gas grills inside a home or enclosed space. These items produce carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that you cannot smell or taste.

## TELEPHONE HOTLINES:

For information about **health** issues call the CDC hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO

If you suspect that someone has been **poisoned**, call the National Poison Control Center at 1-800-426-4435.

Report **oil and chemical spills** by calling the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802.

## 5 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Most **homes built before 1978** have lead paint and asbestos insulation. Lead and asbestos are also in the dirt left by the floodwater. To learn about lead and asbestos clean up call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

**Is stored food safe to eat?** Damaged and opened containers of food should be discarded. All food in your refrigerator should be thrown away.

**Can I drink the water?** If bottled water is not available, adults and teens can drink water that has been boiled or treated. Do not use tap water to make infant formula and give children bottled water only until local officials say the tap water is safe to drink,

**Mold is dangerous to your health.** It spreads through the air and it may be in the air you breathe. Only a N95 respirator that fits snugly will protect your lungs from mold in the air. Some people wear a dust mask or bandana but these do not protect your lungs. Also, a respirator will not fit men with beards and mustaches. If mold covers more than 10 square feet of your walls and you do not have a respirator, you should leave.

During your first visit look at how much of the home has mold and then contact health officials to learn what you should do. You can get help by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Moldy items such as books and papers that you want to keep can be put in ziplock bags and frozen until you can treat them.

## 6 WHEN YOU LEAVE:

Your hair, skin and clothing will be dirty and may contain hazardous dust and materials. Change into clean clothes as soon as you leave. Shower and put on clean clothes as soon as possible after leaving your home. Wash the dirty clothes separately from your family's laundry.

Do not hold or hug your child until you have bathed and changed clothing.



# Hazard Checklist

**Do not enter the house if there is:**

Structural damage     Downed power lines     Leaking gas

Mold covering *more* than 10 square feet

**Learn how to handle these hazards by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO:**

Mold covering *less* than 10 square feet

Dirt left by the floodwater

Lead and asbestos in homes built *before* 1978

*If you find any of the following items have been damaged or have leaked, throw them away in a double bag and label it "hazardous material." Once utilities are restored you can learn how to dispose of this waste.*

### KITCHEN:

- Drain opener
- Oven cleaner
- Furniture polish

### BATHROOM:

- Toilet bowl cleaner
- Mouthwash
- Prescription Medicines
- Non-Prescription Medicines
- Sharps

### GARAGE/BASEMENT:

- Gasoline, kerosene and solvents
- Windshield washer fluid
- Antifreeze
- Paint Thinner
- Pesticides
- Garden Chemicals

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This fact sheet provided by:

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