

Did You Flood? Register with FEMA Today!

Contact your insurance company first. FEMA comes in behind your insurance for further possible assistance. It starts with getting a FEMA number. This number will be your number throughout the application process. To register, call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362)

OR go online to: www.disasterassistance.gov

You will be asked for:

- Your Social Security Number
- Insurance Information
- A Contact Number
- Direct Deposit Information for Electronic Funds

Be sure to have a pen in hand to record important information, such as the FEMA number you will be provided. If you're under mandatory evacuation....Call FEMA and register... You will get up to 2 months of rental assistance at the fair market value of your area.

Going back into your home?

Though flood waters may begin receding from your neighborhood, do not go back into your home until authorities say it is safe (i.e. despite the temptation, do not drive around the barriers). This may not happen until Thursday or Friday, as Harvey finally leaves the area. Roadways can appear safe, but flood waters could erode the ground from under the asphalt, creating sinkholes. Wait until roads are free of water and safe to drive before attempting to return. Avoid standing water as well---water could be electricity charged from power lines, or hide dangerous wildlife (think alligators, snakes, or floating beds of fire ants.).

Once you get into your home, the first thing you should do is turn off the electricity at the main breaker, even if power is out in your community. Turn off the gas valves that feed into each individual appliance (stove, water heater, etc.). Then, carefully check your home to make sure there is no structural damage. Flood waters can put tremendous strain on the structure of a home. Take plenty of pictures of anything that is damaged, and contact your insurer immediately. As you begin any cleanup efforts, keep receipts. It may take insurance adjusters days or even weeks to assess your damage, so keep meticulous records.

Getting your structure gutted, cleaned and drying is your NUMBER ONE priority at the moment, don't worry about the rebuilding process...get it drying!

Equipment and Chemicals to Purchase ASAP (You can order all on AMAZON!) **(Keep All Receipts for Government Reimbursement if you qualify):**

- Dehumidifier: <http://a.co/i4i7mvN>
- Blowers or Air Movers: <http://a.co/776uq7D>
- Spiral Saw or Something Similar <http://a.co/aiXFpdA>

- This will be used to cut out sheetrock and used to cut out and put up sheetrock.
- Moisture Meter: <http://a.co/5XKeXKT>
 - This will be used to test the moisture in your studs.
- Concrobium Mold Control: <http://a.co/gDVh7kV> or Microban: <http://a.co/3GHXiDu>
 - **Always wear proper Personal Protective Equipment as per the chemical label when spraying chemicals.**
- 4 Gallon Backpack Sprayer: <http://a.co/16hN9rC>
- Electrical Voltage Tester: <http://a.co/cFZ4JCK>
- Flat Shovel, Wheel Barrow, Contractor Size Trash Bags, Push Broom, Various Hand Tools like screw drivers, hammers, flat bars, masks, gloves, box cutters, nail pullers.

Things to think about:

- Take LOTS of photos with your phone of your structure, water line on a window, types of contents, flooring, finishes, etc. This will be for FEMA (Individual Assistance and Flood Insurance) and SBA. If you have flood insurance and you gut before an adjuster can look at your dwelling then keep samples of all your finishes and LOTS of photos.
- Make a list of all your contents you lose and their value. You will use this if you have flood insurance and on your tax return for loss deductions.
- Start gathering these documents:
- Proof you lived at the residence: utility bill or driver's license
- Proof you own the property: tax bill or mortgage statement
- FEMA will provide individual assistance for qualifying counties up to \$33,000.
- SBA will provide low interest (~1.5%) long term (20+ years) loans as well.
- Storm chasers with cleanup crews will come from all over charging outrageous amounts of money to gut and clean your structure. Be mindful and seek a licensed mold remediation contractor. Go to this website to search for licensed contractors: <https://www.license.state.tx.us/mlr/mlr.htm>
- Contractors, even some reputable ones, will rip people off, use sub-contractors you trust or recommended to you by a trustworthy person. Visit the link above to verify the contractor is licensed for the work being performed.
- Doors and Cabinets will be a huge backup/delay in the rebuild process, if you want the same cabinets as before then pull measurements and right them down, take photos and get a reputable cabinet shop secured soon after demo.
- Bleach should not be used on porous material like wood, metals, etc. It will not kill the mold spores that have penetrated the pores. It can be used to clean surfaces of non-porous material.
- The only way to know if you truly have a safe environment is to get an Air Quality Test completed by a licensed contractor.

Clean-Up

- 1 If you have solid countertops like granite or quartz that you want to save, call a company right now to have them come remove them and store them properly at your house on an A Frame. Solid countertops are HEAVY and can break at weak points when not handled correctly.
- 2 Get ALL contents that flooded out of the house but you don't have to throw it all away. You will be overwhelmed and feel like you're at the end of a bad move to a new house where you just start throwing stuff away but don't. If you want to keep it then keep it...outside...let it dry then when the time is right try to clean it and restore it. The one thing I heard the most was that people threw away more than they needed to.
- 3 Start demoing:
 - a. Depending on how much water was in your structure you will demo everything down to the studs at least 24" above the water line. And since sheetrock comes in 4' wide sheets it is often best and easiest to demo up to 48 1/2".
 - b. Remove all insulation and sheetrock on every wall. **Note: cut the insulation at the same height you demo the sheetrock and only remove that section. Lots of BATT insulation was not stapled when installed so if you don't cut the insulation and just pull you will remove insulation behind good sheetrock causing issues later.**
 - c. If water was above your electrical outlets then remove all of them. Remember to test for voltage before removing.
 - d. Remove all door and cabinet hardware (this can be used again if you want)
 - e. Remove doors, if they are solid wood or metal doors then you can probably reuse them.
 - f. Remove Appliances: Test the appliances if you have power and you can probably clean and keep them.
 - g. Cabinets: you will have to make the decision on how much you remove. It is about getting to places to make sure you can clean properly and dry it out properly.
 - h. Fixtures: remove all plumbing, electrical, towel holders, etc. You can keep, clean, and reuse all of these.
 - i. Flooring: remove all carpet.
- 4 Once everything is demoed then utilize [this document](#) for recommendations on mold removal and cleaning/chemicals to utilize and how to dry out your home safely.

Lost wages because you couldn't go to work?

Call FEMA 1-800-621-3362 and register for disaster relief. Register for unemployment at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>

Vehicle flooded?

You'll need to have liability coverage on your vehicle at the time of the disaster, your title and registration for FEMA (1-800-621-3362) to pay. If you have full coverage you must file with your insurance company first and then file with FEMA.

If you are not comfortable with car repairs and maintenance, the best thing you can do is have your car towed to a trusted auto mechanic. Contact your insurance company and let them know what happened. If the vehicle is in your possession, you should not try to start the car, as that may cause damage that cannot be repaired. You can also open all the doors of the car, and allow it to dry out before any repairs are attempted.

Looking for your Towed Car?

Go to www.findmytowedcar.com. This is a link that will ask you to insert your license plate number and the place it is towed is supposed to appear.

For Clean Up Assistance Contact CrisisCleanUp.org

Due to the high volume of need following Hurricane Harvey, Crisis Clean-up is providing a phone number to call and leave a message relating to your need. Call 1-800-451-1954 to report your need. This number will be available through September 15th. This is not a line for urgent needs. It is likely going to take some time to get to your need. For urgent needs call 2-1-1.

Worried about past due or upcoming bills?

Call your provider! EVERY COMPANY is pushing back due dates & some are even credited full months of service if you're in Houston or surrounding areas. Call your light companies, phone companies, cable companies, car loan bank/company, and anyone else and get the extra months to give yourself time to come back from this disaster!! All you must tell them is you are located in Houston or surrounding counties and was affected by the hurricane....A lot of them are already aware of what's going on here and have policies in effect to help us.

Protect Yourself from Disaster-Related Fraud and Scams

As storms and flooding wreak havoc across Texas, FEMA officials are warning of another danger: scam artists and unscrupulous contractors out to fleece communities and survivors struggling to recover from disaster. Be aware of these most common post-disaster scams:

Housing Inspectors: If home damage is visible from the street, an owner/applicant may be vulnerable to those who pose as housing inspections and claim to represent FEMA or the U.S. Small Business Administration. Ask for identification. Federal and state representatives carry photo ID. A FEMA or SBA shirt or jacket is not proof of affiliation with the government.

FEMA inspectors **never** ask for banking or other personal information. FEMA housing inspectors verify damage but do not hire or endorse specific contractors to fix home or recommend repairs. They do not determine eligibility for assistance.

Building contractors: Natural disasters bring out fraudulent contractors offering clean-up and repairs. When hiring a contractor:

- Use licensed local contractors backed by reliable references; recovery experts recommend getting a written estimate from at least three contractors, including the cost of labor and materials; and read the fine print.
- Demand that contractors carry general liability insurance and workers' compensation. If he or she is not insured, you may be liable for accidents that occur on your property.
- Avoid paying more than half the costs upfront. Doing so offers little incentive for the contractor to return to complete the repairs.

Please for post-disaster donations: Con artists play on sympathies of disaster survivors, knowing that people want to help others in need. Disaster aid solicitations may arrive by phone, email, letter or face-to-face visits. Verify charitable solicitations:

Ask for the charity's exact name, street address, phone number and web address, then phone the charity to confirm that the person asking for funds is an employee or volunteer.

Don't pay with cash. Pay with a check made out to the charity in case funds must be stopped later. Request a receipt. Legitimate nonprofit agencies routinely provide receipts for tax purposes.

Offers of state or Federal aid: Beware of anyone claiming to be from FEMA or the state and asking for a Social Security Number, bank account number or other sensitive information.

Scammers may solicit by phone or in person, promising to speed up the insurance, disaster assistance or building permit process. Others promise a disaster grant and ask for large cash deposits or advance payments. Here's how to protect yourself:

Federal and state workers do not solicit or accept money. FEMA and SBA staff never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in filling out applications.

If you have any doubts, do not give out information and file a report with the police.

If you suspect fraud, call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at **866-720-5721**. If you are a victim of a home repair or price-gouging scam, call the Office of the Texas Attorney General at **800-252-8011**. For information regarding disaster-related fraud and how to protect yourself, visit the disaster webpage for the May storms at fema.gov/disaster/4272; or visit the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at txdps.state.tx.us/dem. Follow us on Twitter @ femaregion6.

Download fema.gov/mobile-app to locate open shelters and disaster recovery centers, receive severe weather alerts, safety tips and much more. FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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How to Clean and Disinfect Washable Clothes

As soon as possible, sort soiled clothes into piles of washable and dry clean only fabrics.

Sort washable clothes into whites and colored clothing. Do not leave wet colored clothes mixed with whites because dye transfer can occur.

Using a hose, rinse as much as possible from the clothing. Do not put mud covered clothing directly in the washer because the sludge can overwhelm the washer's drainage system.

Wash the clothes in the hottest water recommended for the fabric. To disinfect, for white cotton fabrics, add one cup chlorine bleach in the wash cycle. For fabrics that cannot be washed with chlorine bleach (spandex, wool, silk, colored clothes), add one cup of pine oil disinfectant such as Pine-Sol or one cup of phenolic disinfectant such as Lysol to the wash.

After washing with disinfectant, inspect clothing for remaining stains. If stains remain, do not dry the clothing. Allow soiled clothing to soak overnight in a solutions of oxygen-based bleach (OxiClean, Clorox 2, Country Save Bleach, Purex 2 Color Safe Bleach are brand names) and then wash as usual with regular laundry detergent.

Dry clothing in a dryer at the highest heat recommended for the clothing to help kill bacteria. White clothes can be hung outside in the sun where ultraviolet rays will help kill bacteria.

How to Handle Dry Clean Only Clothes After a Flood

After the dry clean only clothes have been sorted, inspect each one carefully. Dry-clean garments may need to be dry cleaned several times and you should weigh the cost of multiple cleanings against the cost of the item. Replacement may be more cost-effective.

If the clothing is heavily coated in mud, use a water hose to remove as much heavy soil as possible.

Allow the clothing to air dry away from direct heat and sun. Do not leave wet clothes in a pile or place in plastic bag because mildew and mold will grow.

As soon as possible, take the clothing to a professional dry cleaner. The dry cleaning process will disinfect the clothing and hopefully remove the stains. Be sure to tell the dry cleaner that the clothes have been in a flood.

Additional Tips to Clean Flood Damaged Clothes

Do not sort wet, contaminated clothing on surface where bacteria can be spread. Clean every surface that comes in contact with the contaminated clothing.

Do not store any wet clothing in plastic bags which encourages mildew growth and stains. If you cannot clean clothes immediately, spread out the dirty clothes and allow them to air dry individually before washing.

If your washer has been contaminated with flood waters, it should be cleaned and disinfected before using (instructions follow in this article). It should also be checked by a technician to be sure it is safe to use.

If the soil in the flood waters is high in iron content, chlorine bleach can cause rust spots to appear on clothing. Separate treatment will be needed to remove the rust stains.

How to Clean and Restore Leather Shoes and Accessories

Remove mud from leather while the mud is still wet. Do this as soon as possible by using a hose with running water. Try not to scrape away the mud with anything sharp or rough textured which can damage the leather.

Use a soft damp cloth to remove final bits of mud from stitching and intricate areas.

Use soft paper, like tissue paper to stuff shoes back into the proper shape. Newsprint can be used but there can be some transfer ink to the insoles. Do not use shoe trees because they may overstretch the leather.

Dry shoes at room temperature. Do not use a heater or place in the sun to dry more quickly. This will harm the leather. A circulating fan can help speed the drying process by increasing air flow.

After the shoes dry, clean with saddle soap.

When shoes are completely dry, condition with a leather conditioner and polish with a good shoe polish or cream. Do not wear the shoes until they are thoroughly dry or they may become misshapen and even crack or rip.

If mildew growth has already begun on the leather goods, follow these tips to remove the mildew and save your shoes or clothes.

How to Disinfect a Washer

Set the washer to the largest load capacity and fill with hot water.

Add one cup chlorine bleach.

Set the washer to a full cycle with hot water rinse. Allow to run through the entire cycle.

Clean the exterior of the washer - top, front and sides - and all other surfaces in the laundry room with a solution of chlorine bleach and hot water. Rinse with clean water.

Additional Maintenance Tips:

If the washer has been through a flood, have a technician check the appliance before cleaning and using,

If a dryer has been contaminated by flood water, have it checked by a technician and then wipe down the drum and outside of the dryer with a solution of chlorine bleach and hot water. Always rinse well with a cloth dipped in clear water.

How to Prevent and Remove Mildew in the Laundry Room

Even without a flood, laundry rooms offer the perfect climate for mold growth - heat and humidity. Mold is destructive to the structure of your home and can jeopardize health. Taking steps to control humidity, frequent checks for the beginnings of mold growth and quick clean-up can keep problems at bay.

Keeping humidity in the laundry room below fifty percent will deter mold growth, prevent you dryer from working harder and make you feel more comfortable. Humidity can be reduced with a dehumidifier, an open window, a good ventilation system or a ceiling fan. If you live in a high humidity climate and your laundry room has poor ventilation, use a semi-gloss paint for the walls and ceiling that has an anti-mold and mildew agent added.

Clothes should be removed from the washer immediately and hung on a clothesline or dried in the dryer. Wet clothes can actually mildew in the washer. If they are removed without treating the mildew, spores can spread and cause more problems. Water connections to the washer should be checked frequently for leaks. Even if you don't see a leak, there could be hidden trouble. Using a dry hand towel or cloth, wipe around each connection to feel for dampness. A water leak will often cause walls to bubble or ripple. It can also cause mold to grow in the insulation behind the drywall. If you see a black or bluish stain on the wall, clean up must begin immediately.

Washers, especially front-loaded models, can harbor mold and mildew spores. Frequent cleaning and leaving the door of the washer open after each cycle can help alleviate problems.

The build-up of dryer lint can also cause mold problems. If at all possible, the dryer should vent outside with an approved dryer vent. The vent should be checked frequently to ensure that it is securely attached to the dryer and is clear of lint. If you feel the transfer of air around the vent when the dryer is operating, there are holes that are leaking moist air. Replace as soon as possible.

We all know that removing the lint from the dryer filter after each use is essential to keeping your dryer operating properly and preventing fires. Lint can also build-up in the dryer hose and around the outside vent encouraging mold growth. If you notice a musty smell in your dryer, it is time to clean the hose thoroughly as well as the outside vent.

At the first noticeable sign of mildew or whiff of mustiness, use a scrub brush and a solution of water and chlorine bleach to wipe down surfaces. Be sure to wear a mask and gloves to protect yourself from airborne spores. When cleaning the laundry, use an antibacterial spray or cleaning product to prevent regrowth. If the mold has grown into the drywall or insulation, the area must be replaced to get rid of the mold infestation.