

Flood Recovery Resource: Reentering Your Home After a Flood



Gas and Electricity Concerns:

Fire is the most frequent hazard following floods. Damaged electric wires and leaking gas pipes as well as chemicals in your home can cause a fire.

- Enter during the daytime to assess any damage to avoid using electricity. Use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns. Avoid candles, gas lanterns and torches.
- There may be broken or leaking gas lines, flooded electrical circuits, or submerged furnaces or electrical appliances. Flammable or explosive materials may have traveled or spread.
- If your home has standing water but you can reach the main electrical switch from a completely dry location, turn off the main electrical switch and gas before entering. If in doubt or cannot access your property safely call your gas and electricity company.
- Never use an electric tool or appliance that has been submerged in flood water or while standing in water.
- If flood waters have receded, and you can enter, it is still important to look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell burning insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. Check that electrical equipment is dry before use.
- If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, leave the house, call 911 or your gas company. If you can do so safely turn off the gas at the outside main valve and open windows. Warn neighbors.
- Never use a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside the home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent when outside.
- Power and gas should be turned back on by a professional after they confirm there has been no damage to wires or appliances connected to the gas and electrical system.

Other immediate hazards:

- Use extreme caution with every step. Building damage may have occurred where least expected.
- Floodwater may contain raw sewage, animal waste, toxic substances, chemicals, fungus, bacteria, electrical wires, and other harmful materials. Wear sturdy rubber boots, gloves, and goggles. Avoid exposure to floodwater if you have an open wound.
- Examine walls, floors, doors, staircases, and windows to make sure the

building is not in danger of collapsing and watch for loose plaster, drywall, and ceilings that could fall.

- Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage.
- Watch out for animals and snakes that may have come into buildings with the flood waters.
- If the house has been closed for several days, enter briefly to open doors and windows to let the house air out for a while (at least 30 minutes) before staying for any length of time.

Further guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is available:

- [Food Safety](#): Some foods may be contaminated and need to be thrown away.
- [Water Safety](#): Water may not be safe to drink or use. Septic systems may be damaged. Follow guidance from your health department or utility company.
- [Clean up your home safely](#): Protect yourself while cleaning up your home. Also see [Tips on Cleaning Mold After A Flood](#) and [Homeowner's and Renter's Guide to Mold Cleanup After Disasters](#)
- [Household hazardous waste](#): Harmful chemicals should be safely removed and disposed.