

Disaster Recovery – Fact Sheet

Cleanup Salvage - Miscellaneous Household Items

Hot Water Systems

A flooded hot water system should be repaired by an experienced repair person only. Controls can suffer hidden corrosion damage. They may operate adequately for a while, but cease to operate safely in the future. Testing seldom reveals future problems. Burners or electrical components should not be assembled or adjusted by the home owner/occupant.

Disks and Tapes

If a computer disk or tape has valuable information, rinse it in clear water and put it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Later, you can take it to a professional drying centre and have the data transferred to a new disk or tape.

The Yard

As you get rid of things from your home, do not turn your yard into a dump. Food and garbage must be removed as soon as possible. Other discarded items should be removed as soon as your insurance assessor has told you how to make sure the loss of those items is covered.

The BBQ

Have a licensed plumber check the gas fittings for the BBQ. Clean and disinfect the BBQ plate thoroughly.

The Lawn

Lawns usually survive being underwater for up to four days. Some grasses are not damaged by saltwater flooding however, hose salt water off the lawn and shrubs. You may have to replace the lawn if there was mud thicker than one inch deep, erosion or chemicals in the floodwaters.

The Shed

Hand tools should be dried, a blow drier will help. Use a water repelling spray such as the lubricant WD-40 to get into hinges and joints.

Electrical tools should be checked by a licensed electrician before use.

Sporting equipment can be cleaned using normal cleaning products and disinfectant.

Paints and poisons should be disposed of appropriately and safely.

Clothing, Household Linens & Woollens

- Allow clothing that is to be dry-cleaned to dry slowly at room temperature, away from direct heat. Shake, brush or vacuum loose dirt from the articles before sending them to the cleaners.
- To clean washable woollen clothes and blankets, first shake and brush to remove the dirt, then rinse repeatedly in lukewarm water to remove particles of soil lodged in the fibres.
- Dry woollens in a warm place, but not near a fire or in direct sunlight.

- To clean mud-stained, washable clothing and household linens other than woollens, first brush off any loose dirt, then remove as much mud as possible by rinsing repeatedly in cool water.
- Electric blankets should be dried on a clothesline and gently stretched into their original size and shape. They should NOT be used until safety tested by a qualified electrician.
- Wash lightweight quilts in the same manner as woollens. Dry outdoors in the sun, if possible, to remove any unpleasant odour. Thick comforters may need to be taken apart and the cover and filling each washed separately.
- To further ensure sanitisation of washable articles, sanitise the washing machine occasionally to kill bacteria that live on the interior surface. Pour a disinfectant into the empty machine, and then complete a 15-minute cycle at the hot water setting.

TV/Radio Sets

TV and radio sets, even if completely immersed may be salvaged and repaired provided the cabinet is sound and appearance acceptable to the owner.

Those wishing to try to salvage items are advised to take the following steps:

- If still wet and muddy, thoroughly and gently hose the set internally and externally with clean fresh water, or if it has dried out, gently brush out dirt etc.
- In either case, then apply a non oil-based water repellent/cleaner (for example, isopropyl or methylated spirits) to all metal and electrical parts, avoiding rubber components.
- Allow to dry (seven days). In the meantime, call an expert for a repairs quotation.

Valuable Books and Papers

Wet paper attracts mould and will continue to deteriorate until it dries. Separate the sheets of paper as soon as you can and allow them to dry. Separate sheets not touching one another can be placed in a photographic print dryer, but care must be taken to prevent them from scorching.

Larger quantities of paper such as in filing cabinets can be placed in a freezer to stop mould and deterioration. Separate into small bundles. When time allows, bundles can be removed, allowed to thaw, and individual sheets separated and dried. Do not try to unfold wet paper because it tears easily.

Many stains can be removed from water damaged paper with non sudsy household ammonia. Use it in a well ventilated place to avoid fumes.

Place books on end to dry and keep the pages apart. If books are very damp, sprinkle cornflour or talcum powder between the pages to take up the moisture, leave for several hours and then brush off.

After exposing books to the air for a time, pile and press them to keep the pages from rumpling. Continue this alternate drying and pressing until they are dry to prevent mildew. Just before they are completely dry, apply a little heat between the pages to prevent musty odours.

Photographs

Do not let your photographs dry out, as when they dry they will stick together and will be impossible to separate. Try to get to flood-damaged photographs within two days to prevent the growth of mould.

If you can not work on them, carefully stack the wet photographs between sheets of wax paper and seal them in a Ziploc plastic bag. If possible, freeze the photographs to slow any damage. This way photos can be defrosted, separated and air dried later when you have time to do it properly.

Place wet (or frozen) photographs in a tub of cold, clear water and separate any that are stuck together. Do not allow water from the tap to run directly onto the photos, as this may further damage them.

Dislodge any dirt by gently moving the tub of water then lay the images face up on kitchen towel. Never wipe the wet emulsion of a photograph.

Leather

Remove surface dirt from the leather by rinsing with cold water, then wipe with a dry cloth. Stuff purses and shoes with crushed paper to retain their shape. Leave suitcases open. Dry leather away from heat and sun. When dry, rub with saddle soap. Neatsfoot oil may be used on shoes that have become stiff; however, it causes leather to darken. Paste-type neutral floor wax may be used on leathers as a final polish if they are not to be refinished by a commercial cleaner.

Use fine steel wool (lightly) or a suede brush on suede.

Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water. Dry away from heat.

To remove mildew from leather goods, wipe with a cloth wrung out of diluted household bleach. Dry in an airy place. If mildew remains, wash with thick suds of a mild soap or detergent, saddle soap, or a soap containing a germicide or fungicide. Then wipe with a damp cloth and dry in an airy place. Polish leather shoes and luggage with a good wax dressing.

Furniture

Promptly place pieces of wood or aluminum foil under furniture that has castors or metal caps on the legs to avoid staining the carpeting.

When weather permits, take all furniture outdoors, but keep it out of direct sunlight to prevent warping or fading. A garage or carport is a good place to work. Remove as many drawers, slides, or other moving parts as possible. If the furniture is made of wood, these will probably be jammed in position. Do not force drawers with a screwdriver or chisel. If possible remove the back of the furniture – cutting it out if necessary and push out the drawers.

If kitchen cabinet doors or drawers are stuck, do not force them open. Once they have dried out they should be easier to open.

Clean off all mud and silt from furniture items, using a hose if necessary.

To remove mildew from wood furniture, scrub with a mild alkali, such as four to six tablespoons of baking soda to five litres of water. Rinse well with clean water and allow to dry thoroughly. After cleaning, store the wooden furniture inside the house or garage where it will dry slowly; do not leave it out in the sun as it might warp and twist.

To remove mildew from upholstered furniture, first remove loose mould from outer coverings by brushing with a broom. Dry the article as quickly as possible with an electric heater, fan, or any convenient method to carry away moist air. Sun and air the article to stop the mould growth.

CAUTION: Sunlight may fade the colour of your upholstery.

If mildew remains on upholstered articles, sponge lightly with thick suds of soap or detergent and wipe with a clean, damp cloth. Use as little water on the fabric as possible to avoid soaking the padding.

Wood furniture that has not been submerged may have developed white spots or a whitish film or cloudiness from dampness. Try rubbing with a cloth wrung out of a mixture of half cup household ammonia and half cup water, turpentine, camphorated oil or oil of peppermint. Wipe dry at once and polish with wax or furniture polish.

If colour is not restored, dip fine steel wool in oil (boiled linseed, mineral, or lemon) and rub lightly with the grain of the wood. Wipe with a soft cloth. Use a drop or two of ammonia on a damp cloth for deep spots; immediately rub dry with a soft cloth and then polish. If all efforts to remove white blemishes are ineffective, it may be necessary to refinish the furniture.