

Guide to

FLOOD RECOVERY



CANADIAN
RED CROSS

Floods are the most frequent natural disaster in Canada. Happening at any time of the year, floods are most often caused by heavy rainfall or rapid snow melting. Often times, your community will know about a flood coming, so you will have time to prepare. This guide provides information on what to do after you have experienced a flood in your home.

**BEFORE
YOU
START**

Here are some basic steps you may want to take

If you cannot stay in your home due to flood damage, you will need to find temporary housing for your family and any pets. For help, contact your local government office.

In a disaster, families may become separated or loved ones outside the disaster area may be trying to reach you. If you are looking for a family member, contact your local Red Cross office.

Contact your insurance company and let them know what has happened. They will want to know a record of damage to your home and belongings and may request photos or video.

After a flood, you may be eligible for government disaster financial assistance. Check with your local authorities for more information related to available assistance programs.

Before entering your home

Listen to public authorities to advise when it is safe to return to your home. Protect yourself by dressing properly, including rubber boots or sturdy boots, safety glasses, hard hat, rubber gloves and a dust mask.

Here is a list of recommended items that will help you in the recovery process:

Camera or video camera

Notebook and pen to record damage

Buckets, mops and sponges

All-purpose cleaner or unscented detergent

Large containers for soaking bedding and clothing, and lines to hang them to dry

Flashlight

First aid kit

Tools (hammer, pliers)

Trash bags

Drinking water

The Red Cross recommends that you have 4 litres of bottled water per person, per day in your emergency preparedness kit. For more information on preparing a kit, visit redcross.ca/prepare

You may need to rent extension cords, submersible pumps, wet/dry vacuums and dehumidifiers or heaters. Contact your local home improvement store for information. Be sure to keep the extension cords out of any water.

Check the outside of the house for any signs of damage or danger. Do not enter your home if there is:

Standing water around the house.

Loose power lines.

Natural gas or propane leaks, or gasoline spills.

Check the foundation, roof and steps for damage.

Contact a building inspector or structural engineer for advice.

Check with your municipal government for a listing of building inspectors.



Entering your home and cleaning up

Use extreme caution as you enter your home. Look for buckled walls and floors, and sagging ceilings. If you see any of these, leave the home and contact authorities. Watch out for holes in the floor, broken glass, and other debris.

Check with local authorities on how to properly dispose of damaged items from your home.

Hazardous materials

Contact your municipality or provincial ministry to find out how to dispose of hazardous materials such as solvents, garden chemicals and home cleaning products that have been soaked or that show signs of water damage.

Tap water

Flood water can be heavily contaminated with sewage and other pollutants. Do not use your tap water for drinking, cooking and washing dishes until it has been tested and/or confirmed safe for use by local authorities.

Standing water

Remove water from your flooded home slowly. Drain it in stages – about one third of the volume daily. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors could buckle. Use pumps or pails to remove standing water, then a wet/dry shop vacuum to mop up the rest.

CLEANING UP

Do not use flooded appliances, electrical outlets, switch boxes or fuse-breaker panels until they have been checked by a qualified electrician.

Have your central heating system checked by a qualified technician before use. Replace any parts that have been damaged or soaked.

Replace filters and insulation inside furnaces, water heaters, refrigerators and freezers if they have been wet. You may need to consider replacing the whole appliance, depending on the severity of the damage. Consult with a professional electrician or with the manufacturer.

Replace any telephones that have been exposed to floodwaters as they may be a safety hazard.

Contact the appropriate utility or service company to have your service restored (i.e. electricity, gas, cable, phone, etc.) when you are ready to return home.

(Please check the Yellow Pages or phonebook to find the professionals listed above.)



Foundation, floors and walls

Clean or replace footing drains outside the foundation when clogged. Consult a professional plumber for advice. Check the Yellow Pages or phonebook for listings.

Flush and disinfect floor drains with an all-purpose cleaner or unscented detergent and water.

Rinse and clean all floors after consulting with a professional cleaner. You may need to replace flooring that has been heavily soaked. Dry carpets within the first two days. Hire a qualified professional for large carpeted areas.

Throw out carpets soaked by sewage, as they are unsalvageable.

Clean all affected interior walls with all-purpose cleaner or unscented detergent and water.

Furniture

Remove residual mud and soil from furniture and dry it off.

Consult a furniture restoration professional to see if any upholstered furniture can be salvaged. Check the Yellow Pages or phonebook for listings.

Remove cushions from covers and dry separately.

You may need to replace particleboard furniture entirely if it has been saturated by floodwater.

HEATING APPLIANCES AND UTILITIES

Dispose of all medicines, cosmetics and toiletries that have been exposed to flood water.

Undamaged canned goods can be kept. Wash thoroughly and use antibacterial soap to disinfect outside of can.

Dispose of the following items if they have been exposed to smoke, soot or heat from the fire:

Contents of the freezer or fridge including all meat and produce (fresh or frozen)

All boxed foods

All bottled drinks and products in jars (area under the seal cannot be properly disinfected)

Cans with large dents or with any external damage

Clothing

If affected by the flood, use your washer and dryer only once they have been checked by a qualified electrician.

Scrape all heavy dirt from clothes, rinse and wash several times with detergent and dry immediately to prevent mould from forming.

Books, photographs and papers

Books may be salvaged by slow, careful drying.

Most photographs can be air-dried, face up. If they were frozen, thaw and then air-dry photos.

To salvage important documents, put them in the freezer immediately. Later, allow them to thaw and lift off each page as it thaws. Consult your lawyer to determine if the actual documents are important to save, or just the information on the documents.

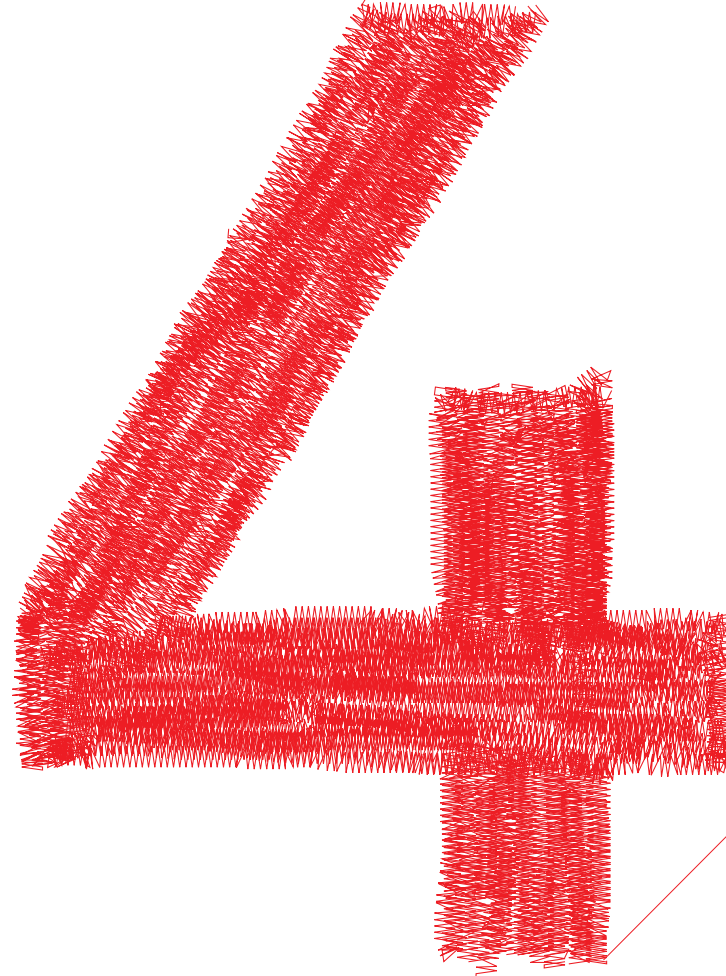
For advice on salvaging books, photographs or paintings damaged by flooding, contact the Canadian Conservation Institute toll free at **1-866-998-3721**.

Yard

Remove any dirt or debris from your yard.

Remove any food or garbage that might attract animals or insects.

Contact a waste removal company if required. Check the Yellow Pages or phonebook for listings.



FOOD AND MEDICINE



PLANNING FOR DISASTER

Long-term recovery after a flood

Consider hiring a contractor or flood restoration specialist. Professional companies can help you with cleaning and repairing your home. If you are making an insurance claim, your insurance adjuster may help you find a contractor.

Arrange for necessary inspections and building permits. Contact your municipal housing office to find out what steps you need to take to submit plans for rebuilding your home and to get required building permits.

Before moving back into your home, ensure the following:

The water supply has been inspected and officially declared safe for use.

Every room that was affected by the flood has been cleaned, disinfected and dried.

All affected dishes, utensils and glasses have been thoroughly washed and disinfected.

Adequate toilet facilities are available.

**Now that you are
on your way to
recovering from
this flood, don't
forget to start
preparing yourself
and your family in
case another one
comes along.**

For information on preparing your family and pets for disasters, visit redcross.ca/prepare

For more information on cleaning up after a flood, please refer to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's website or visit one of the links below:

After the Flood: A Homeowner's Checklist

cmhc.ca/en/co/maho/yohoyohe/momo/momo_007.cfm

Water Damage, Mold and House Insurance

cmhc.ca/en/co/maho/yohoyohe/momo/momo_005.cfm

Fighting Mold – The Homeowner's Guide

cmhc.ca/en/co/maho/yohoyohe/momo/momo_005.cfm

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Western Canada

100, 1305-11th Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta T3C 3P6
(403) 541-6100

Ontario

5700 Cancross Court
Mississauga, Ontario L5R 3E9
(905) 890-1000

Quebec

6, Place du Commerce
Verdun, Quebec H3E 1P4
(514) 362-2930

Atlantic Canada

133 Troop Avenue
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 2A7
(902) 423-3680

National Office

170 Metcalfe Street, Suite 300
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2P2
(613) 740-1900

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Red Cross gratefully acknowledges the following publications:

- "After the Flood – A Homeowner's Checklist" – Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- "Floods: what to do?" – Public Safety Canada

The information in this publication is for reference only. It should not be considered as a substitute for consulting with specialists about particular situations. It should not be assumed that all flood recovery measures are contained in this publication; other or additional measures may be required under particular or exceptional circumstances. The Canadian Red Cross makes no guarantee, warranty or other similar representation as to the quality or completeness of the information contained in this document and under no circumstance shall the Canadian Red Cross be held liable to any person relying on the information contained herein.

The red cross emblem and designation "Red Cross" are reserved in Canada by law for the exclusive use of the The Canadian Red Cross Society and for the medical units of the armed forces by the Geneva Conventions Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. G-3.

© 2010 The Canadian Red Cross Society

The Canadian Red Cross Society
ISBN 978-1-55104-527-6

REDCROSS.CA