



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
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*Commissioner*

## Major Flood Damage and Mold: How to Make Repairs Safely and Effectively

Flood-damaged homes from Hurricane Sandy require special attention to address mold. Mold may be a health risk to you, your family and anyone cleaning up and removing debris.

### Recognize the Problem

- Flood-damaged homes may already have extensive mold growth. Mold needs water and a food source to grow. It comes in many different colors, may look furry, slimy or powdery, and often smells musty, stale or earthy. The type of mold does not affect how it should be cleaned.
- Mold can grow on ceiling tiles, wood products, paint, wallpaper, carpeting, sheetrock, clothing, furniture and other materials. Aside from obvious areas where mold is visible, inspect hidden areas for discoloration, mold growth and odors, such as crawl spaces, attics, and behind wallboards or paneling. Also inspect carpet backing and padding, wallpaper, moldings (*e.g.*, baseboards) and insulation.
- Check your home's exterior and under/behind siding for damage and wetness. You may have to remove the siding to allow the structure to dry out thoroughly.

### Remove and Clean Damaged Building Materials

- Remove moldy materials right away. Never fog or spray to clean up.
- Dry out affected areas as soon as possible. Open windows, use fans if available, and remove and discard porous building materials that got wet.
- Discard or thoroughly clean and dry water-damaged items such as rugs, furniture or clothing with detergent and water.
- In general, discard damaged or porous building materials, including ceiling tiles, wall paneling and drywall/sheetrock. Remove wallboard at least 6 inches above the watermark along with any insulation that soaked up water or is visibly damaged or soiled.
- Remove and discard wet wall insulation. Other insulation, such as that around old pipes and boilers, may contain asbestos. If you're not sure if the damaged insulation contains asbestos, contact a licensed asbestos contractor. Do not remove it yourself.
- Clean moldy, non-porous materials, such as metal, glass, and hard plastic, with water and detergent such as liquid dish detergent. Wood, furniture, concrete and other semi-porous or porous materials can be cleaned if they were not damaged and are structurally sound. Do not use full-strength bleach or mix bleach with other cleaning products. Only use

diluted bleach (1-cup household bleach added to 2 gallons of water) on areas that require disinfecting.

- Leave walls open until they dry out to prevent sealing in moisture. Do not replace walls, siding, tiles, sheetrock or other items until all building materials, such as insulation and internal wall framework, are completely dry and clean.
- Put discarded material in sealed plastic bags and throw away with the regular trash.
- After the repairs are done, all areas should be left dry and visibly free of mold, dust and debris. Damp areas, bubbling or peeling paint, recurring mold growth or musty odors may indicate a persistent problem.

### **Safety Precautions**

- Open windows and doors to air out the area as much as possible. Dust, mold and using strong cleaning products can irritate eyes, throat and lungs.
- Keep children and pets away from areas you're cleaning.
- Wear an N-95 respirator and safety glasses or goggles if cleaning will produce dust. N-95s fit the face and nose and provide better protection. Wear rubber gloves and head protection.
- Clean with detergent (*e.g.*, dish detergent) and water. Do not use full-strength bleach or mix with other cleaning products, like ammonia. Only use diluted bleach on areas that need to be disinfected.
- If your home has extensive damage, consider hiring a professional to clean up and repair your home
- Do not run any electrical equipment or appliances near standing water or on wet materials. Wash your hands often with soap and water – especially before eating or drinking.
- Clean or gently mist dry surfaces with a dilute detergent solution before removing sheetrock or other building materials to minimize dust. If available, use HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) vacuum-shrouded tools or a vacuum with a HEPA filter.

### **Contact your insurance provider**

- If you are applying for disaster assistance or filing an insurance claim, take photos of all damage before cleaning up and keep receipts of all repairs. For more information about submitting a claim, contact your insurance provider.
- Contact the New York State Insurance Department, Consumer Services Bureau if you have complaints about your insurance provider: 800-342-3736.

**For more information or help, visit a NYC Restoration Center near you or call 311.**

# Flood Cleanup and the Air in Your Home

**Flood water can make the air in your home unhealthy.**



This is because when things get wet for more than 2 days they usually get moldy. There may also be germs and bugs in your home after a flood.



**Clean and dry your house and everything in it.**

Clean and dry hard surfaces. Throw away anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned.

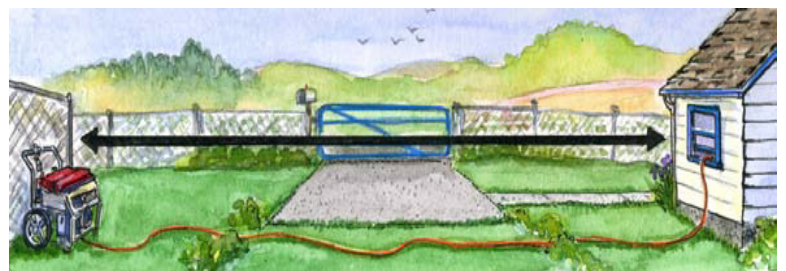
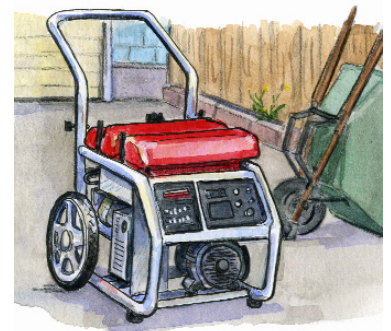


**What to wear when cleaning:**

- ✓ A N-95 respirator (found at Hardware stores)
- ✓ Goggles
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and
- ✓ boots or work shoes

**Use portable generators OUTSIDE and far away from the building.**

The exhaust, or fumes, from a portable generator could kill you in minutes if you breathe it in!



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) free hotline 1-888-283-7626.  
Find more on the EPA website [www.epa.gov/sandy](http://www.epa.gov/sandy)