

05

After a flood



Fact: Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters.



Always be careful when re-entering a property after a flood. Flooding can weaken foundations and move heavy items into unstable positions. Have any electric, gas or fuel-based service checked by a professional before turning them on and take the following precautions:

Afterwards

- ◆ Assume all power lines are live – check that the power in the property is off before you do anything.
 - ◆ Check for the smell of gas and make sure the mains are turned off.
 - ◆ When entering a room look at the ceiling for any signs of cracks or bulges. Wet plaster is very heavy and can pose a threat to the structure of the property.
 - ◆ If your basement is flooded do not rush to pump it out. If the ground outside is saturated it could create uneven pressure on the basement walls, leading to potential structural problems.
 - ◆ Be careful when moving any debris and seek help in moving heavy or unstable items that could trap or crush you.
 - ◆ Do not enter any building that has large amounts of sediment either inside or lying against it, as the structure may be unstable.
 - ◆ Be careful when moving around inside the property: standing water can hide a lot of hazards.
 - ◆ Standing water can be a breeding place for micro-organisms which can be released into the air when the water is disturbed. These can be a health hazard if inhaled. Remove all items from the water as soon as possible and wear a protective mask if asthmatic or if you have chest problems.
 - ◆ Remember that water can be contaminated – wash your hands with disinfectant if they come into contact with floodwater or silt debris.
- Once you are satisfied that it is safe to enter your property there are a few things you must do before you start to clean:
- ◆ Record the damage caused by the flood on a camera or video recorder.
 - ◆ Mark the water levels on the walls for reference.
 - ◆ Check with your insurance company. They will usually pay for any clearing up, cleaning and sanitising following a flood.
 - ◆ Always make sure your insurance company has given approval before any work is carried out.