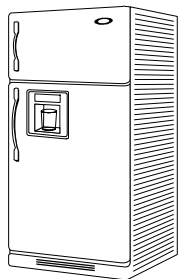


Salvaging Water-damaged Belongings

Appliances • Furniture • Carpet and Flooring • Clothing

Caring for Large Electrical Appliances



Appliances wet by flood waters or by rainwater after roofs were damaged will need extreme care before reuse. This care will be important if the life of the appliance is to be extended and for the safety of the user.

Appliances submerged by flood waters, particularly saltwater, are often not repairable. Appliances that have been wet by rainwater and not flooded are often repairable. It is always desirable to have these repairs made by a reputable service person. Following disasters, however, individuals who have these skills often are very busy, and the owner of the appliance may find it necessary to make repairs.

Remember that an appliance damaged by water can sometimes be made functional, but will probably have a shortened life expectancy. Depending on the age and condition of the appliance before it was damaged by water, and considering the danger of personal injury from improper repairs, it may be advisable to replace the appliance rather than repair it.

Many small appliances, including television sets, microwave ovens and radios, are more electronic than electrical. The tips offered in this fact sheet do not apply to electronic repairs. Most small appliances or electronic devices are not economical to repair.

Safety

Approach a flooded or wetted appliance with caution. Water can short-circuit an electrical appliance so that parts which don't normally conduct electricity can shock you.

Disconnect power to the building or to the circuit which feeds the suspected appliance. Then unplug the appliance. If the power to the building or neighborhood has been shut off, be sure all appliances suspected to have water damage have been unplugged before power is restored.

If you are uncertain whether an appliance has been damaged by water, do not test it by plugging it in and/or turning it on. Either treat it as damaged or have a knowledgeable individual check for electrical shorts to assure that it is safe to use.

Motor and circuit repairs

- Disconnect all switches, contactors, motors and electrical wiring. Make a diagram of the connections, or list the steps you took to disconnect these items; this will help you remember how to reassemble the parts.
- Flush all parts of the system with clean water, and allow the parts to dry for several days before reconnecting.
- Use spray-on drying agents to help in the displacement of moisture in contacts, motors and so forth.

- Re-assemble the disconnected parts referring to your diagram or list of steps.
- Be sure the appliance is dry and properly grounded before reconnecting.

Insulation and Mechanical Components

Appliances that are insulated such as ranges, ovens, freezers, refrigerators and waterheaters need to have wet insulation removed or dried in place.

- Remove insulation by opening the frame of the appliance; consult your owner's manual for construction details. Use gloves when removing the insulation. Clean the cavity before installing new insulating material. Duct insulation can be used to replace the old fiberglass insulation.
- On appliances where fiberglass insulation cannot be removed, carefully drill holes in the outer casing so the insulation can dry.
- Newer freezers and refrigerators include foam insulation that will not require removal.
- Remember to check the mechanical parts of the electric appliance. Such things as the bearings, hinges on doors and other moving parts should be dried and lubricated to prevent rust.

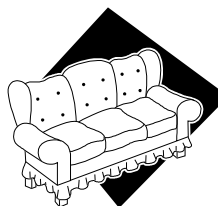
Preventing damage from future floods

If the appliance was damaged by flood waters which were less than two feet deep, you can help prevent future damage by installing the repaired or replacement appliance on a platform.

- Consider elevating the electrical system itself. Install all electrical switches and outlets 12 inches above either the 100-year flood level or the level of the highest known flood at your location - whichever is higher.

- Check with the local permit office to see if permits are required for any physical alteration of the location of your appliances or for modification of the electrical wiring in your building. Permit and inspection requirements vary greatly throughout the state.

Salvaging and Cleaning Furniture



Before starting to salvage damaged furniture, decide which pieces are worth restoring. Such decisions should be based on: extent of damage, cost of the article, sentimental value, cost of restoration and quality of the wood or fabric. Consider each piece individually.

Restore or Replace?

Antiques

Antiques are probably worth the time, effort and expense of restoration. Unless damage is severe, you can probably clean, reglue and refinish antiques at home. Extensive repair or re-veneering work should be done at a reliable furniture repair shop.

Solid wood furniture

Solid wood furniture can usually be restored unless damage is severe. You will probably need to clean, dry and reglue it. Do not throw away solid wood furniture until it has dried and repair efforts can be assessed. Slightly warped boards may be removed and straightened or replaced.



Wood veneered furniture

Wood veneered furniture is usually not worth the cost and effort of repair, unless it is very valuable monetarily or sentimentally. If veneer is loose in just a few places, you may be able to repair it. Veneered furniture repairs are usually best done by a reliable refinisher.

Upholstered furniture

Upholstered furniture may be salvageable, depending on its general condition. Flooded pieces will need to be cleaned and dried, and mildew should be removed. If damage is extensive, you may have to replace padding and upholstery. Since this is an expensive process, it might be wiser to apply the money toward a new piece of furniture.

You will not need to repair all pieces immediately. Any furniture worthy of repair should be completely cleaned, dried and stored in a dry, shady, well-ventilated place until you have time to repair it. Wooden furniture damaged by floods can best be salvaged through slow drying and proper repair.

First Steps to Restoration

Submerged or wet furniture

Take furniture outdoors, and remove as many drawers, slides and removable parts as possible. Drawers and doors will probably be stuck tight. Do not try to force them out from the front. With a screwdriver or chisel, remove the back and push out the drawer from behind.

After you have removed movable parts, clean off mud and dirt, using a hose if necessary.

Take all furniture indoors and store it where it will dry slowly. Furniture left in the sunlight to dry will warp and twist out of shape.

When furniture is dry, reglue it if necessary. You will need equipment and clamps to reglue some pieces. Before you start, decide whether you have the time, equipment and ability to do the work. Consult an experienced carpenter if necessary. Many books are available on the subject.

To reglue loose joints or rungs, cut or scrape off old glue so the area will be as clean and free of glue as possible. Use a white all-purpose glue, following directions on container. Hold parts together with rubber rope tourniquets or C-clamps. To prevent damage from ropes or clamps, pad these areas with cloth.

Damp furniture - removing white spots

White spots or a cloudy film may develop on damp furniture that has not been submerged.

If the entire surface is affected, rub with a damp cloth dipped in (a) turpentine or camphorated oil or (b) in a solution of 1/2 cup household ammonia and 1/2 cup water. Wipe dry at once and polish with wax or furniture polish.

If color is not restored, dip 3/0 steel wool in oil (boiled linseed, olive, mineral or lemon). Rub lightly with the wood grain. Wipe with a soft cloth and re-wax.

For deep spots, use a drop or two of ammonia on a damp cloth. Rub at once with a dry cloth. Polish. Rubbing cigarette ashes, powdered pumice or a piece of walnut into spots may also help remove them. Be sure to wear rubber gloves when using these solutions.

If spots remain after all efforts to remove them, the piece should be refinished.

Cleaning Tips

Always wear rubber gloves when using cleaning solutions or working with flood-damaged or moldy furniture.

Read fiber content labels.

Test a hidden area using a solution of lukewarm soapy water (1 tablespoon soap to 1 quart water) or a bleach solution (1 tablespoon bleach to a pint of water) to see if color is removed or fabric shrinks. Allow to dry, then decide if the fabric can be cleaned. Sponge fabric to remove dirt, and use bleach solution to remove and prevent molds. Fabric may be removed from frame to clean, depending on the damage.



Remove tacks, nails, braid, other fasteners.

Although wet synthetic foam padding can be restored, the risk of contamination and costs usually make replacement a better option. Wet cotton or other organic padding should always be replaced.

Wipe down wooden frames with a 2 tablespoons bleach to 1 gallon water solution to remove or prevent mold or mildew. Wipe dry and allow to air dry in an open shady place (never dry furniture in direct sunlight).

Dry springs and other metal parts. If rust has formed, you may need to replace or clean. Use steel wool and coat with paint. A light oil could be wiped on metal parts to help prevent later rusting. Many major manufacturers keep records of fabric or metal parts which can be ordered from the dealer for replacement.

Be sure all parts are dry before reassembling.

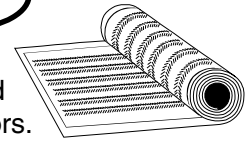
A reliable furniture repair shop will give estimates on cost of redoing furniture. Also, consider replacement cost and value of each piece. If insurance allows part value on flood-damaged furniture, it may be financially worthwhile to apply the money to new articles, rather than pay for extensive repairs.

Cleaning Carpets and Floors

Cleaning water-soaked carpets and floors is difficult in itself, but in the aftermath of a storm or flood, contamination by mud, silt, sewage and mildew can compound the problem.

It's best to get professional cleaners to work on carpets and floors, but this may not be possible. In any case, begin cleanup as soon as possible.

Tips



- Pull up saturated carpets and rugs, and drape them outdoors.
- Hose muddy carpets down. Work a low-sudsing, disinfectant carpet cleaning product deep into soiled spots with a broom.
- If only small areas of carpet got wet from leaks, pull up and prop the wet carpet to dry. Cut away wet padding.
- To discourage mildew and odors, rinse the backing with a solution of 2 tablespoons bleach to 1 gallon water. Don't use this solution on wool carpets. Also disinfect the slab or subfloor.
- Discard and replace foam pads.
- Sections of subfloors that separate must be replaced to avoid buckling. When floor coverings are removed, allow subfloors to dry thoroughly, even though it may take several months. Disinfect all wet surfaces to prevent mildew.
- In wood floors, remove a board every few feet to reduce buckling caused by swelling. Ask a carpenter for tips on removing tongue-and-groove boards.
- Clean and dry floor thoroughly before attempting repairs.
- In vinyl floors with wood subflooring, the floor covering should be removed so the subflooring can be replaced. With concrete floors, removal isn't necessary except to hasten drying of the slab.
- Loose tiles may be replaced if the floor has not been soaked. If water has seeped under sheet flooring, remove the entire sheet.
- While cleaning, wash exposed skin frequently in purified water. Wear rubber gloves for extra protection against contamination.

Cleaning Storm-soaked Clothing

When cleaning clothes soaked during storm flooding, remember that the flood water may have been contaminated with sewage waste. Simply drying these clothes is not enough. For safety, they must be disinfected to kill harmful bacteria. Two tablespoons of liquid chlorine bleach per washer load will kill bacteria without substantially damaging clothes. Do not use more than 2 tablespoons per washer load unless all the clothes can be safely bleached.

Dry cleaning is also effective.

Do not use bleach on wool, silk, feathers and foam.

Tips for storm-soaked clothing

- Separate wet items as soon as possible to keep clothing colors from running together. Sort out clothing that should be drycleaned. Do not mix flood-soiled clothes with clean clothes. Take care not to contaminate work surfaces.
- Items to be drycleaned should be air-dried and taken to a cleaner as soon as possible. (If you suspect they may have been in sewage-contaminated water, wear plastic gloves.) Do not dry the clothes near a heat source such as a stove. Once dry, shake and brush clothing outdoors to remove as much soil as possible.
- Rinse washable items several times in cold water. If badly soiled, soak overnight in cold water and an enzyme product or detergent. Wring out and air dry if you're unable to machine wash.
- Machine wash clothes as soon as possible. Use a heavy duty detergent and a disinfectant such as 2 tablespoons of chlorine bleach, pine oil or a phenolic disinfectant. Use highest water level possible, don't overcrowd washer and use hottest water temperature suitable for the garments. Select the longest wash cycle available. Dry in a dryer (if available) at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric.

- Stained or very dirty clothes may require adding an appropriate bleach to the wash. Follow directions on the bleach containers and garment tags for types and amounts to use.
- If an item is still stained after washing, rewash before drying. Drying may make some stains harder to remove.

For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service office listed under local government in the telephone directory.





“This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project numbers 92-ESNP-1-5184 and 96-ESNP-1-5219.”

Contributors:

Fred E. (Gene) Baker, Ph.D., Associate Vice Chancellor for Information Technology
Claudette Reichel, Ed.D., Specialist, Housing
Evva Z. Wilson, Ph.D., Specialist, Apparel and Textiles Management
Robert H. Mills, Ph.D., Specialist, Forestry

Visit our website: www.lsuagcenter.com

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, William B. Richardson, Chancellor
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Jack L. Bagent, Vice Chancellor and Director

Pub. 2668-D 7/99 Rev.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Service work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.
