Hurricane, Re-entering Your Flooded Home

When returning to a home that's been flooded after natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and floods, be aware that your house may be contaminated with mold and/or sewage. This can cause health risks for your family.

WHEN YOU FIRST RE-ENTER YOUR HOME:

- If you have standing water in your home and can turn off the main power from a dry location, then go ahead and turn off the power, even if it delays cleaning. If you must enter standing water to reach the main power switch, call an electrician to turn it off. **NEVER turn power on or off yourself. Never use an electric tool or appliance while standing in water.**
- Have an electrician check the house's electrical system before turning the power on again.
- If the house has been closed up for several days, enter briefly to open doors and windows before you stay for any length of time. This will let the house air out for awhile (at least 30 minutes).
- If your home has been flooded and has been closed up for several days, presume your home has been contaminated with mold.
- If your home has been flooded, it also may be contaminated with sewage.

DRY OUT YOUR HOUSE

If flood or storm water has entered your home, dry it out as soon as possible. Follow these steps:

- If you have electricity and an electrician has determined that it's safe to turn it on, use one of these to remove standing water:
  - A "wet-dry" shop vacuum.
  - The vacuum function of a carpet steam cleaner.
  - An electric-powered water transfer pump or sump pump.
- If you are operating equipment in wet areas, be sure to wear rubber boots.
- If you do not have electricity, or it is not safe to turn it on, you can use a portable generator to power equipment to remove standing water. **Note: If you must use a gasoline-powered pump, generator, pressure washer, or any other gasoline-powered tools to clean your home, never operate the gasoline engine inside a home, basement, garage, carport, porch, or other enclosed or partially enclosed structures, even if the windows and doors are open. Such improper use can create dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide. This could cause carbon monoxide poisoning.**
- If weather permits, open windows and doors of the house to aid in the drying-out process.
- Use fans and dehumidifiers to remove excess moisture. Fans should be placed at a window or door to blow the air outward rather than inward. This will help prevent mold from spreading.
- Have your home heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system checked and cleaned by a maintenance or service professional who is experienced in mold clean-up **before you turn it on**. If the HVAC system was flooded with water, turning on the mold-contaminated HVAC will spread mold throughout the house. Professional cleaning will kill the mold and prevent later mold growth. When the service determines that your system is clean and safe, you can turn it on and use it to help remove excess moisture from your home.
- Prevent outdoor water from reentering your home. For example, rain water from gutters or the roof should drain away from the house. Also, the ground around the house should slope away from the house to keep basements and crawl spaces dry.
- Be sure that crawl spaces in basements have good drainage to limit water seepage. Ventilate (allow air to flow through) to allow the area to dry out.

This information is courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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