



RE-ENTERING YOUR HOME

A home that is flooded might be contaminated with mold or sewage, which can cause health risks for your family. There might also be safety risks if your gas and electric service was interrupted. The following tips will help you avoid or reduce health and safety risks as you re-enter your home.

Avoid the Flood Zone

- Turn around, don't drown. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that half of all flood-related drowning occurs when a vehicle is driven into flood waters. The next highest percentage is due to walking into or nearby flood waters.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles. Six inches of water can knock over an adult.
- Stay out of areas that are barricaded or closed.

Practice Natural Gas Safety

- Do not enter your home if you notice a natural gas odor. Immediately call your local utility company or fire department.
- Have your furnace and gas appliances inspected by a professional repair person. Have them re-light the appliance or furnace.
- While waiting for your furnace to be re-lit, do not use other heating sources, such as gas space heaters, grills, or other appliances that can give off dangerous fumes.
- Keep portable generators outside and at least 20 feet from structures, with exhaust pointing away from other people or homes. Gas appliances make carbon monoxide, which is dangerous and can be deadly. Read more about carbon monoxide in this fact sheet ([INSERT LINK TO NEW CO FACT SHEET](#)).

Practice Electrical Safety

- Never turn power on or off while standing in water.
- Have your electrical system inspected by an electrical contractor or building inspector.
- Any electrical outlets that were submerged **MUST** be inspected for safety.
- If you have electrical problems, call your local utility company.
- Electrical appliances that were exposed to water must be completely dry before use. *Note:* Electrical motors that were submerged probably will not work (e.g., refrigerator motor).
- If you use electric heaters, be careful to place them away from items that can burn. Do not leave electric heaters unattended.

Clean Up After Water Damage

- Buildings that have been flooded should be inspected by a building inspector for structural damage before re-occupancy.
- If your basement is flooded, don't rush to pump it out. If you drain your basement too quickly, the pressure outside the walls will be greater than the pressure inside, which may cause the basement floor and walls to crack and collapse.
- Broken water pipes may have created puddles in your home. Using electrical appliances while standing in water can cause electric shock or electrocution.
- If you receive a cut or puncture wound while cleaning your home, tetanus shots are available through your local public health department (dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/counties.htm).
- If you are on municipal water, run water faucets for at least five minutes before using water for drinking or food preparation. If a "boil water" notice is issued, follow any directions given by the Department of Natural Resources, the local utility company, or your local health department.
- Damaged or wet flooring, carpeting, furniture, drywall, insulation, etc. should be moved and disposed of to prevent mold growth.

What to do with Food after the Flood

Type of Food	Proper Action after Flood
Baby formula	Use only prepared, canned baby formula that requires no added water.
Food not found in waterproof containers	Discard if they have come into contact with flood water.
Canned foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discard if damaged. • Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the can labels, wash cans, disinfect with one cup bleach to five gallons of water. Re-label cans, including expiration date, with a marker.
Screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, and home canned foods	Discard if they have come into contact with flood water.
Refrigerated or frozen food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check food for spoilage by their odor and appearance. • Perishable foods left at room temperature for more than two hours should be thrown out. • Frozen food that has thawed should be thrown out.



Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Division of Public Health

Climate and Health Program

P-00631c (Rev. 01/2019)