

What do I need to do to make my home safe after a flood?

Things to do before moving home



Turn off electricity before entering your property	
Contact your insurance company as soon as possible to report the damage	
Take photos of all the damage, even if you don't have insurance. Legal Aid may be able to help you with claims, and there may be other grants you can access in future	
If you don't have flood insurance, contact Legal Aid for free help in dealing with your insurer	
If you do or do not have insurance, contact a licensed builder to assess the damage and provide a quote for necessary repairs	
If you don't have insurance, ask about grants available at flood outreach centres, or phone 6581 8444	
Power - before switching your power back on, an electrician needs to check any switches and power points that were under water	
Gas - bottles and piping may have been damaged. Contact a licensed plumber to assess damage	

CLEAN UP - Floodwater often carries sewage, bacteria and viruses.

This is not a job for young children to help with.



Wear personal protective equipment at all times until the house is clean: P2 face mask, eye protection, rubber gloves, sturdy boots	
Remove furniture, rugs, appliances, toys, files, photos - anything that has come into contact with flood water	
Remove carpets	
Remove any loose tiles	
Remove any doors, cupboards or other items and fixtures swollen or warped by floodwater	
Muck-out: hose out all the mud inside and outside (avoid high-pressure cleaners on fibre board and asbestos). Look for mud in less obvious places	
Remove damaged plasterboard 300mm above the high water mark	
Dry out - circulate fresh air through every room. You may need fans or dehumidifiers to help.	
Clean any mould growth with a commercial mould removing product	
Disinfect walls, floors, cupboards - every surface	
Leave hard surfaces wet with disinfectant for 10 minutes before rinsing	
Wash and disinfect utensils, kitchenware (see how-to over the page)	
Throw away soft furnishings, plush toys, carpets, mattresses, lounges and anything that cannot be disinfected and thoroughly dried. Tip fees are waived for flood-affected properties.	
Throw away food that has come into contact with floodwater, food in damaged containers, and food in the fridge which was without power for 4 hours or more	
Disinfect cleaning mops, brooms and brushes with the bleach solution.	
Clean and dry dirty footwear and wash your clothes separately after clean-up.	

WATCH OUT

If your home was extensively inundated by floodwater, its structure may be affected. If you are concerned, contact a building surveyor (not a builder) to check. Be careful of animals including rodents, snakes or spiders which may be trapped in and around your home. Pets and other animals may have died and need to be removed. For advice on safe disposal speak to your council or vet.

ASBESTOS

Buildings built before 1990 will likely have asbestos-containing material. Any work involving asbestos - should be carried out by licensed asbestos workers. Please read information on council's website or on the **Asbestos Fact Sheet**, before dealing with this material.

MOULD

Mould must be cleaned up before moving back into your home. Use a commercial mould-removing product and follow the directions. It's a good idea to contact an environmental hygienist or building inspector if you're worried about mould.

CONTAMINATION

Flooding may cause sewage, chemicals, bacteria or other contaminants to flow inside your home. Contaminated areas must be cleaned and disinfected.

WATER

Never use unsafe, contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash your hands or in food preparation. Tank water may be contaminated by floodwater.

In most cases, mains water will remain safe. If this is not the case, you will be notified through a **boil water alert**. If you suspect the water is contaminated with chemicals, boiling will not make it safe to drink – only use bottled water.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Wash hands frequently with soap and safe water. Hand sanitisers are an alternative if soap is unavailable – though only use on non-soiled hands.

If you have any open cut or sore that has been exposed to floodwater:

- Wash with soap and cover with a sticking plaster.
- Contact a doctor for further treatment advice (including if a tetanus shot is needed).
- If redness, swelling or discharge occurs get immediate medical attention.

HOW TO DISINFECT YOUR HOME

Clean and disinfect all contaminated areas and items with hot water and detergent, then disinfect.

Disinfectant recipes

To make up a 10-litre bucket (standard size) of disinfectant, put on gloves, fill the bucket with water and then add ONE of the following:

50mls (quarter of a cup) of 4% chlorine (household bleach) OR 8-16mls (dessert spoon) of 12.5% chlorine (liquid pool chlorine)

You can also use any disinfectant product available to buy at supermarkets or other stores.

Always follow safety advice on labels.

CHEMICALS

Household hazardous waste includes materials such as acids and alkalis, brake fluids and coolants, car care products, cleaning products, paint, pesticides, insecticides, rodenticides, herbicides and other garden chemicals, polishes, pool chemicals, solvents (including paint thinners, turpentine) and varnishes and stains.

Wear personal protective equipment when handling hazardous chemicals during disposal, particularly gloves. Keep hazardous materials separate to be disposed of appropriately. Hazardous waste can be dropped off at any Port Macquarie Hastings Council Waste Transfer Station for free.

Further information

Have you registered with Service NSW? It's essential to do so. Phone 13 77 88

Do you need a hand with cleaning up or have flood-related questions? Call Port Macquarie Hastings Council on 6581 8444. Do you feel you need someone to talk to? Call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Disclaimer: This information is provided in good faith as a guide and is current as at: April 28, 2021. Information collated from NSW SES, Insurance Council of Australia, NSW State Government, NSW Health and PMHC.