

UNDERSTANDING BASIC FLOOD RECOVERY PROCEDURES



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IF YOU HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY FLOODING

DON'T

expect things to return to normal in the immediate future. Recovering buildings and property damaged by flood water can be a lengthy and specialised process.

DO

be prepared to have your life disrupted for some time. If temporary accommodation is required you need to bear in mind that it may be your 'home' or 'workplace' for many months, depending on the amount and nature of the damage to your property.

PROPERTY AND BUILDINGS (If you have appropriate insurance the information in this leaflet should be used in conjunction with advice from your insurer)

If you are NOT insured:

DON'T

be taken in by unscrupulous workmen. Because you want to get back to normal as quickly as possible it is easy to agree to a seemingly cheap and immediate solution. Using inexperienced or unprofessional contractors could lead to major problems and prove very expensive.

DO

check on a contractor's experience and reputation. You should ensure work is supervised by properly qualified technicians who are experienced in water damage recovery and restoration. ITEMS OF

PARTICULAR PERSONAL OR SENTIMENTAL VALUE, (ANTIQUES, FINE ART, etc)

DON'T

assume they cannot be restored. There are many specialist restorers and conservators who can return badly damaged items to their previous condition. This includes things such as papers, photographs, certain fabrics, jewellery, ceramics, artwork, antique furniture, etc.

DO

Ask the contractor to get a specialist opinion and a cost estimate. In the case of valuable items, it may be cheaper to restore than replace.

IF IN ANY DOUBT about the ability or credentials of a company offering to deal with recovery work advice should be sought, preferably from an insurer or loss adjuster, or a competent professional, before work commences.

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The restoration of property and possessions after flooding requires specialist knowledge and should be undertaken by professionally qualified damage management technicians.

FLOODING CAUSES SEVERE STRESS TO EVERYONE AFFECTED

After a major flooding incident stress can be compounded by delays and lack of information due to the number of simultaneous demands on insurers, loss adjusters and contractors, and the sheer volume of resources needed to respond.

CONSEQUENTLY, THOSE AFFECTED MAY BE PARTICULARLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO PRESSURE FROM UNPROFESSIONAL OR UNSCRUPULOUS WORKMEN

The information in this leaflet will allow those affected by flood or water damage to understand the basic procedures professional contractors will follow and should be used in conjunction with advice from insurers or relevant parties.

In addition to carrying out necessary recovery and restoration work a competent damage management contractor will undertake the following:

- A Risk Assessment
- Assessment of potential for secondary damage
- Control and mitigation of the situation where possible
- Categorisation of the incident
- Provision to the customer of Health & Safety information
- Assessment of the cost of damage/restoration
- Report of projected costs to relevant persons or organisations

Following flood damage the competent organisation will verify the full extent of primary and potential, or consequential, secondary damage. Information and advice offered to those affected will meet common duty of care requirements.

Control, measurement and records of drying progress are essential.

Buildings and/or contents should be left in the same condition as before the incident where at all possible. Where this is not possible the reasons and likely outcomes should be notified to the occupier or property owner and other interested parties.

After flood or water damage the competent restorer will aim to leave buildings and contents clean, dry, odour free and sanitised. This of course cannot always be achieved for contents, in which case the relevant parties should be advised accordingly in order to consider alternative options, such as replacement.

Recovery and restoration imply returning a damaged item or building to its pre-incident condition, within a time frame and cost scale that is acceptable to the client. The work required is highly specialised but will often prove more cost effective than replacement.

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Refurbishment or replacement relates to renovation and renewal and this work is likely to be undertaken by other operatives such as builders, decorators, plumbers and electricians.

WHAT IS MEANT BY CLEAN? The cleaning process includes locating, identifying, containing, removing and properly disposing of unwanted substances from an environment or material. An area is considered 'clean' when contaminants, pollutants and undesired substances have been removed from an environment or surface, thereby reducing damage or harm to human health or materials.

WHEN IS A BUILDING CONSIDERED TO BE DRY? Ideally, a building or its contents should be returned to the condition that existed prior to the incident. In cases where the structure was previously suffering from damp it will be up to a loss adjuster, insurer or competent professional to determine what is an acceptable recovery level.

A building, its materials or contents are considered to be 'dry' when the moisture content of building components, and water absorbing contents, achieve 'equilibrium' within a normal healthy indoor relative humidity and room temperature environment. In other words, the equilibrium moisture content is sufficiently low to prevent active growth of fungal spores and any further moisture damage to the property or its contents.

A competent organisation will know when drying operations should cease. This would normally be when they are satisfied that:

- The internal conditions are at, or better than, normal room conditions.
- The moisture on and in the building materials themselves will not support active growth of mould and mildew.
- The building materials and contents will finish returning to equilibrium within normal room conditions by themselves, without suffering further damage.

ODOUR FREE

While individuals have different perceptions of smells and what is unacceptable, odour can often be an indication of potential risks to human health.

Where possible the source of any odour should be removed, the area cleaned and sanitised and, in extreme circumstances, sealed.

Overlaying odour with fragrances or masking of bad odour is not acceptable and is potentially dangerous. If odour reoccurs after professional cleaning it is usually due to poor decontamination or other processes.

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SANITATION

Sanitary conditions exist in an environment that supports the natural balance of life, as opposed to sterile conditions which require a laboratory environment.

Where there is a high level of micro-organisms these should be reduced to a level which can be demonstrated to be safe, or at least equivalent to pre-existing conditions. Sanitation will normally involve procedures for removing the source of the problem, followed by thorough cleaning and the application of a sanitising agent.

RECOVERY TECHNICIANS WILL NOT GIVE MEDICAL ADVICE

However, it is their responsibility to alert clients to potential health threats from the contamination or possible short-term side effects of the sanitising process.

They should enquire and make note of anyone whose immune system may be deficient or compromised, such as the elderly, young children and those with respiratory or other health problems, advising them of the risks. Anyone who is at all concerned should consult their GP.

