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Emergency Flood Information *Salvaging Damaged Clothing*

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Clothing salvaged from flooded homes needs immediate attention to prevent mildew and unpleasant odors which are difficult to remove from the garments. Since disease-producing bacteria often carried by floodwater can remain alive for long periods in and on fabrics, special care of flood-damaged clothing is essential.

For washable items, brush off all loose, dried dirt. Rinse thoroughly in cold water as soon as possible until as much mud as possible is removed. Repeat if necessary. Do not immerse flood-soiled clothing in hot soapy water. Hot water sets rust-like stains from red or yellow clay. Machine wash when no more dirt can be rinsed out. Wash as usual, but be sure to use enough detergent to keep soil from redepositing on fabrics. Repeat washing if necessary.

Since bacteria from floodwater can remain alive on fabrics for a long time, use an appropriate disinfectant for particular fabrics. Following are a list of the disinfectants.

1. Quaternary compounds such as Roccal* and Zephrein* are safe for all fibers, will not damage wool or silk, but may cause some color change. Add this disinfectant at the beginning of the rinse cycle. Read and follow label directions. Quaternary compounds are available in drug stores and janitorial supply houses.
2. Pine oil disinfectants such as King Pine*, Pine-o-Pine*, and Texize-o-Pine* are safe for washable clothing. Do not use on wool or silk, because the pine odor will linger in these fabrics. Check the label to be sure that the product contains at least 80 percent pine oil. Add it at the beginning of the wash cycle, preferable before putting the clothes in the machine. These products are available in grocery and drug stores.
3. Phenolic disinfectants such as Pine-Sol*, and Al-Pine* are safe for washable fabrics. Avoid using these on wool and silk because the odor will remain. Follow label directions. Add the disinfectant either in the wash or rinse cycle. Phenolic disinfectants are available in grocery stores.

4. Liquid chlorine bleaches such as Clorox* and Purex* are safe for all fibers except wool, silk, spandex or resin-coated fabrics like durable press. Add bleach before putting the clothes in the machine. Do not use the bleach in the rinse cycle. Purchase liquid chlorine bleach from the grocery store.
5. Sodium perborate, sodium hypochlorite, or potassium monopersulfate are oxygen bleaches such as Snowy*, Beads O' Bleach*, Clorox 2*, and Vivid* and come in powdered or liquid form. They can be safely used on all types of fabrics and colors, but are not as effective as chlorine bleach. When used consistently, they are effective in maintaining over-all whiteness. Purchase oxygen bleaches from the grocery store.

If garments are to be dry cleaned and are partially dry, completely dry them at room temperature. Brush well to remove as much dirt as possible before sending them to the dry cleaner. Give the dry cleaner full information on the cause of damage and fiber content on those garments not labeled. The professional dry cleaner has skills and techniques that can be successful in restoring clothes.

Leather shoes and other leather articles

Remove mud before it dries on shoes. Wash off remaining mud and grit with cold water. Dry slowly at room temperature. Stuff absorbent paper toweling into shoes to help retain shape and absorb moisture on the inside. Shoe trees may stretch the leather out of shape. As shoes dry, clean them with saddle soap. When shoes are dry, polish with a good paste or cream.

Fiberglass particles in clothing

Following a tornado, fiberglass particles from insulation may be imbedded in clothing. A person will experience skin irritation with the wearing of this clothing. There is no satisfactory way to salvage such clothing and this clothing should be destroyed.

*Reference to commercial products is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended nor endorsement implied.

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