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## CC19 Revised 1979 Emergency Flood Information...Care of Household Utilities and Appliances

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CARE OF HOUSEHOLD UTILITIES  
AND APPLIANCES

# **Emergency Flood Information**

By Rollin D. Schnieder, Extension Safety Specialist

## **L-P (Propane) Gas Installations**

Contact your local dealer before attempting to use your range, water heater or furnace. The help of a competent serviceman should be obtained to check for gas line leaks. Do a good general cleanup of equipment but have a serviceman check burners and controls before using them.

## **Electric Circuits and Equipment**

The whole electrical system should be checked for short circuits by an **electrician**, or **competent** person, before being turned on. Ask your power supplier for advice and help with electrical systems.

Things to do before the electrician arrives:

1. Be sure current is shut off both at the meter and in the building.
2. Remove covers from all switches, convenience outlets, light outlets, and junction boxes that have been under water.
3. If box is filled with mud, remove screws holding receptacle or switch in box. Pull receptacle, switch, and wires in junction boxes out about two inches (5 cm) from box. Clean out all mud and dirt from box and receptacle or switch. **Do not remove electrical connections.** Leave boxes open.
4. Remove all fuses and cover from entrance panel. Clean out all mud. Wires can be moved but **do not disconnect.**

After above has been done and wiring has had a chance to dry, the electrician can check the system without delay.

For some equipment, such as pumps, a temporary line can be installed by an electrician until the permanent wiring has a chance to dry.

## **Appliances**

Here are some general rules to follow:

1. **Motorized appliances**—Remove the electric motor and take it to an electrical repair shop. The controls (thermostat, pressure switches, wiring, etc.) will have to be cleaned and dried. Insulation should be dried and all dirt removed. Sealed units on refrigerators and freezers should not be harmed by water. Clean up unit and recondition controls.

2. **Heating appliances**—Disconnect and flush with clean water. Float out water with carbon tetrachloride. (Be careful of carbon tetrachloride fumes—they are dangerous if inhaled. Do the job in open air and do not smoke.) The insulation on hot water heaters will be soaked. Remove all panels and if possible, the top of the heater. This will give the insulation a chance to dry. Clean and dry thermostat and wiring. Apply rust inhibitor to all metal parts.

3. **Lamps and lights**—Remove fixtures that were submerged. Clean outlet boxes and wiring. Clean fixture and dry out wiring. Check socket for dirt. Floor or table lamps should be completely disassembled and cleaned. Clean up wiring, sockets and switches. If switches cannot be opened for cleaning, replace with new switch. Unless the cord is in good shape, replace it. Check the plug.

4. **Extension cords**—Any cords not in excellent condition should be thrown away. Fabric-covered cords should be replaced. Rubber-covered cords in good condition (no cracks in rubber, etc.) can probably be reclaimed. Remove connections from both ends. Peel back the rubber covering until inside braid is dry. Cut off damaged part of cord. Clean up the plug and receptacle and connect to cord or replace with new ones.

5. **Grounding**—For your protection, all metallic appliances should be grounded when in use to prevent an electrical shock. This applies especially to such appliances as washers, dryers, ranges, waffle irons, etc., and to equipment such as portable drills, saws, and grinders. Attach a wire from the frame of the appliance to a water pipe or to the ground wire in a grounded wiring system.

BE SAFE. Do not use electricity until wiring and equipment have been inspected by a competent person.

### Sewing Machines Damaged By Flood Waters

If an electric sewing machine has been covered with water, take the motor off first. It should be checked by a good electrician before it is used again.

The head of the machine must be cleaned with a solvent.

Parts and sewing machine attachments affected by water should be soaked in kerosene or other suitable cleaner, then drained and soaked in oil. After drying with a soft cloth to remove oil, any parts affected by rust may be cleaned by polishing with steel wool. If the damage is too severe, take the machine to a local sewing machine dealer.

Salvage of a flood-damaged cabinet depends to a great extent on how much of it was under water and how long. Usually it isn't possible to make a definite decision on whether or not the cabinet can be salvaged until it has been allowed to dry for a month or two. By that time, any veneer weakness or core damage will show up as warping, splitting or lifting of the veneer.

Contact your county extension agent for further information.

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