CC20 Revised 1983 Emergency Flood Information...Care of Floors, Walls and doors.

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Emergency Flood Information

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Floors

Water coming into the house through the doors and windows may cause less damage to the floors than water coming up from below. A resilient floor covering, such as vinyl, will protect the floor from standing water for a short period of time. However, water coming up from below the floor, or long submersion, will cause a wooden subflooring to swell and warp, and will loosen adhesives. Resilient sheets or tiles may bulge or buckle.

After standing water is removed, thoroughly clean the floor using a disinfectant such as tri-sodium phosphate (available in paint or hardware stores). Use 4-6 tablespoons to a gallon of warm water. This will help reduce problems with odors and the growth of molds and mildew.

Sub-flooring

It is extremely important to get the sub-flooring thoroughly dry before replacing floor coverings, even though it may take months. Ventilation and heat will help. If the subflooring has gotten very wet remove the floor covering. Sometimes the sheets or tiles can be salvaged to be reused. In some cases, resilient floor coverings are laid with waterproof adhesives. You will need to contact a dealer for the appropriate solvents.

After you have removed the floor covering, wash the subflooring with a disinfectant, such as tri-sodium phosphate, to reduce mold and mildew problems. If the sub-flooring is plywood, it may have de-laminated. If so, the damaged sections will have to be replaced. If parts of the sub-flooring are bulging, drive additional nails through the subflooring into the joists. Once the sub-flooring is dry, you can plane or sand small bulges.

If only some water remains between the sub-floor and the floor covering, you can slash the floor covering in the places where it has buckled, or remove the loose pieces of tile, until the water has evaporated. Then the covering may be re-glued in place.

Silica gels, activated alumina or calcium chloride, are excellent materials to use to absorb excess moisture from floors. Spread these chemicals on exposed sub-flooring. “Kitty litter” can also be used to absorb moisture.

If the damaged floor is on an upper story, it may help to remove the ceiling of the lower level. This will provide more ventilation to the sub-flooring and aid drying.

Wood Floors

Remove water and clean with a disinfectant, as above. Dry thoroughly. While heat and ventilation aid drying, direct heat can cause cracking and splitting from uneven drying. Wood floors may take months to dry.

After the floor is dry, minor warps and bulges can be repaired in several ways. Remove floor boards adjacent to the warped board(s). Sand the edges and replace the boards. This gives the warped board(s) space to flatten out. Some bulges can be reduced by nailing the board to joists. Also, some warping can be reduced by sanding.

After the floor is thoroughly dry, it can be refinished.

(Note: For information on care of carpeted floors, see CC 14 “Emergency Flood Information: First Aid for Carpets & Rugs”).

Walls

Hose down walls to remove mud and silt. If odor is a problem, use a disinfectant solution, such as 2 tablespoons liquid chlorine bleach in a gallon of water, or tri-sodium phosphate, to wash walls. This will also help prevent mildew. Work from the ceiling to the floor to prevent streaking. Rinse thoroughly. Be very careful with plaster walls as scrubbing can damage damp plaster. Work quickly with wall-papered walls to avoid further damage.
Walls must dry from the inside out. Allow the interior framing of walls to dry thoroughly. This may take months. To release water and mud from walls, remove top and bottom strips of siding on the outside of the building. Drill several holes in walls near the inside floorline.

Remove soaked insulation. Fiberglass insulation may be able to be reused when dry. Most other types of insulation will have to be replaced.

**Wall Finishes**

Make sure that the interior wall frame is thoroughly dry before repairing the interior wall. Also, make sure the interior wall is thoroughly dry before repainting, refinishing, or wall papering.

Plaster walls dry slowly. When thoroughly dry, repair cracks and holes. Then walls can be repainted.

Drywall that has been submerged will have to be replaced. Warping may occur above the water line as well.

Paneling is likely to warp both above and below the water line. Prompt removal of standing water and slow drying increases the likelihood of salvaging the paneling. Finishes on wood paneling can be restored using the cleanser-conditioner recommended for doors.

Wallpaper hanging from walls and ceilings is difficult to replace because it is brittle and is likely to be badly stained. Tear it off and redecorate when convenient. Small sections of wallpaper may be stuck back in place. Repaste edges or sections loosened. Use a commercially prepared paste or make your own.

**Doors**

Clean the surface of the doors thoroughly. A disinfectant solution, such as tri-sodium phosphate, will help prevent mildew.

Remove door knobs and lay the doors on a level surface with wooden strips separating them, to speed drying and to prevent warping and twisting out of shape. Avoid direct sunlight. This is especially important with veneered doors. Veneered doors are likely to be ruined by submersion, but some of them may be usable if dried carefully.

Locks, especially those made of iron, should be taken apart, wiped with kerosene, and oiled. If it is not feasible to remove them, squirt in a little machine oil, or a silicone spray, through the bolt opening or the keyhole, and work the knobs to distribute the lubricant. Otherwise the springs and metal casing will soon rust and need replacing. Do not use too much lubricant or it will drip onto the woodwork and will make later painting difficult.

When the doors are thoroughly dry, they may be refinished or repainted. If the finish is not badly damaged it may be restored with a cleanser-conditioner (not recommended for paint or shellac finishes). Mix 3 parts of boiled linseed oil and 1 part of gum turpentine. Pour the oil mixture on the surface of a container of hot water. Use 3/0 or 4/0 steel wool and the warmed oil mixture to clean the wood. Remove excess with a dry cloth.

Contact the Extension Agent in your county for further information.