

1982

CC14 Revised 1982 Emergency Flood Information... First Aid for Carpets and Rugs

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Pfister, Magdalene, "CC14 Revised 1982 Emergency Flood Information... First Aid for Carpets and Rugs" (1982). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 2989.
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Emergency Flood Information

FIRST AID FOR CARPETS AND RUGS

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JUN 03 1988

STACKS

What to do First

If possible contact a professional carpet cleaner. He has the facilities and equipment to dry the carpet quickly and to remove embedded dirt and debris. Potential for shrinkage is high for carpets that have been soaked. The sooner the carpet is dried the less damage may occur. A carpet installer has stretching equipment should wall-to-wall carpet shrink significantly during the drying and cleaning process.

Drying-Out

Whether you contact a professional carpet cleaner or do the work yourself, dry carpets and rugs as soon as possible. Pull up waterlogged carpets immediately to prevent further damage to flooring. Throw away hair and jute pads, but dry and reuse rubber pads. Do not, however, pull up carpets that are glued down as long as the bond remains.

Usually, most of the water can be vacuumed out using a wet-dry vacuum. **Do not use your vacuum cleaner.** Follow this by using fans, opening windows, and turning up the heat to hasten drying. It is possible there may be a separation of seams, however, and this is not easy to correct. An installer may be able to pull the two pieces together, or cut a piece of carpet to fill the gap.

If the carpet is not saturated, pull up a small section and use the exhaust of the vacuum, household fans, crop drying fans or electric lights suspended on coat hangers. Open windows if weather permits. A dehumidifier in the room will be helpful, or turn on the furnace.

Smaller amounts of water in the carpet underlayment can be removed by blowing air between the carpet and the underlayment. This can be done by lifting a corner of the carpet and using a fan to blow air under the carpet.

Remove saturated carpet and rugs to the outside to dry in the sun. Lay the carpet face down to dry; this will cause stains or dye transfers to wick to the back of the carpet instead of to the yarn tips.

As long as the carpet or rug remains wet, the transfer of dye from one colored yarn to another is very small. As evaporation occurs, however, the dye may wick to undyed fibers or fibers of a lighter color. The dye may also wick and concentrate where the evaporation is taking place, producing a circular ring. Once the dye transfers, it is nearly impossible to remove.

Extremely soiled carpets should be hosed off with a garden hose. Shrinkage and color bleeding are likely to occur, but salvaging and reconditioning for emergency use may be all that can be done for badly damaged articles. Hang on a line if possible or lay out flat in a warm dry place. Do not use a regular vacuum, broom, or shampoo until the rug is completely dry. Then clean off as much crusted dirt and sediment as possible.

Shampoo

Use a commercial shampoo or make your own by mixing 1/4 cup (.06 l) mild dry detergent and 1 cup (.24 l) warm water in a pail. Beat the mixture with an egg beater until it forms a stiff foam that looks like whipped cream.

2. With a sponge rub suds on a small patch of carpet (about 2 feet square) with a light circular motion. Use only the foam. (If foam disappears during the shampooing process, beat the mixture again.) Work suds in with sponge. Use a stiff bristle brush if carpet is deeply soiled.

3. Dip sponge in a weak chlorine solution (1/4 teaspoon bleach to 1 cup water). Wring out sponge and wipe suds off carpet.



4. Rinse several times with clear water, wringing most of the water from the sponge each time. Change the rinse water as it becomes dirty. Use as little water as possible on the sponge, since water will weaken carpet backing.
5. Blot up remaining moisture with bath towels or other soft absorbent material.
6. Apply lather to another small area, overlapping the first. (Overlapping helps prevent streaking when the carpet dries). Rinse and blot dry. Continue until the entire surface has been cleaned.

Dry

After shampooing, dry rugs or carpets quickly. Hang rugs on line if possible, or lay them out flat in a warm dry place. An electric fan will speed up drying. Carpets and rugs should be thoroughly dried. Even though the surface seems dry, any moisture remaining at the base of fiber tufts will cause mildew or rot. If you must walk on the carpet before it is dry, put down brown paper, Vacuum again when dry, and brush the nap in one direction.

Resize

- Some older types of rugs may need resizing to make them lie flat and give them body. To resize the rug:
1. Lay the rug face down on papers where it can remain undisturbed for several days.
 2. Check to be sure rug is straight. Tack it down at intervals along its edges.
 3. Apply latex multi-purpose adhesive such as that used for putting down smooth floor covering with a paint scraper, or other stiff-edged tool.
 4. Let the adhesive dry thoroughly.

Contact your extension agent for further information.