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Magdalene Pfister

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Emergency Flood Information

STACKS

FIRST AID FOR CARPETS AND RUGS

By Magdalene Pfister, Extension Specialist
(Interior Design and Home Furnishing)

Dry

It is very important to dry carpets and rugs as soon as possible. Waterlogged carpets should be pulled up immediately to prevent further damage to the flooring. Hair and jute pads should be thrown away, but rubber pads can be dried and reused.

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 it.

Do not use a regular vacuum, broom or shampoo until the rug is completely dry; however, a wet-dry vacuum may be helpful in extracting water. Care should be taken to prevent electrical shock.

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.

Another method is to attach a vacuum hose to the exhaust of the vacuum sweeper and insert the hose in a slit in a carpet seam.

Carpets that are extremely soiled may be placed on driveway and hosed off with garden hose. Hang on a line if possible or lay out flat in a warm dry place. Shrinkage and color bleeding are likely to occur, but with articles badly damaged by floods, it is usually a case of reconditioning them for any possible use. A professional rug cleaner has the equipment and drying room to hasten the process.

Lay the carpet face down to dry. Then, any stain will wick to the back instead of to the tips of the face yarns.

After the carpet is thoroughly dry, vacuum or sweep to get rid of dirt or debris. Move the vacuum slowly to pick up more dirt. Clean off as much crusted dirt and sediment as possible before shampooing.

It is common for seams to separate to some extent. In many cases the seams can be repaired by a carpet installer.

A foam rubber-backed carpet glued to the floor should not be removed as long as the bond remains. Usually, most of the water can be vacuumed out. Follow this with maximum drying methods. 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.

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 household 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 county extension agent for further information.



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Leo E. Lucas, Director