

# emergency **REDiPlan**

## **Clearing out and drying your home after a flood**

It is important to start clearing out and drying your home as soon as the rain has stopped and the water receded. While drying out may take weeks, and complete restoration months, there are many things you can do straight away.

Floodwater is often contaminated so make sure you have good protective equipment for all tasks: strong boots, long pants and sleeves, eye protection and gloves

**Warning:** If the house is badly damaged and looks unsafe, stay out until a building inspector or engineer has checked it. Take care at all times, as damage can be hidden.

### **Clearing out**

To avoid trapping moisture inside the home, everything that is wet and able to be moved should be taken outside to dry (assuming weather permits).

Because of potential contamination it is important to:

- throw out any food that has come into contact with floodwater (even canned, bottled or jarred goods)
- keep children away during the clean up
- use disinfectant when cleaning
- wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking
- disinfect any cuts quickly and cover with a waterproof dressing
- bury any faecal matter quickly.

Floor coverings may need to be removed (see *Repairing floors* fact sheet for further information).

### **Drying**

It will take several weeks, longer in winter, to completely dry out the house.

- on dry days keep all doors and windows open
- on wet days leave windows ajar – the inside of the house will only dry when moisture can get out
- if you have heaters, turn them on in as many rooms as possible, leaving the windows open
- don't use more than one heater per room – some heat will help drive off the moisture, but too much may warp and crack wood
- look for trapped mud in less obvious places – under shower trays, benches, baths and bottom shelves
- remove the skirting or plinth covering these spaces and hose or pump out the mud, then dry as quickly as possible

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- ignore any mould growing on wet linings and timber until drying is complete; it can then be removed with household bleach (see *Cleaning your home* fact sheet for further information). However, seek advice from your council's Environmental Health Officer or your GP if you have family members who have respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

**Tip:** Don't light fires in brick fireplaces for at least two weeks, and then use only small fires until the firebricks have dried out.

## Draining under the house

Drain away any water lying under the house. It may be necessary to dig a pit and pump out the water that collects. Where there is no access, cut a trapdoor in the floor. Getting rid of excess water under wood or particleboard floors is especially important to avoid decay. If you do not feel confident doing this, seek the advice of a licensed tradesperson.

To increase the airflow under the house and assist drying:

- cut back or dig out plants obstructing vents
- leave access doors open
- have a licensed tradesperson knock out the ventilators in the foundations
- remove part of the foundation enclosure, such as baseboards or sheet materials, where fixed to the outside of the stumps.

Forced ventilation, such as air conditioners or industrial fans can be used in areas where there is not sufficient cross flow of air.

**Recovery is a long and sometimes tiring process – make sure you look after yourself. See our booklet *Coping with a major personal crisis* or visit [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au) for further information.**

Australian Red Cross acknowledges the contribution of American Red Cross in the production of this information sheet.

The Red Cross Emergency REDiPlan project provides people with general information to help them deal with the effects of an emergency.

This information sheet is designed to assist people deal with the effects of floods but necessarily contains only information of a general nature that may not be appropriate in all situations.

Before taking any action you should independently consider whether that action is appropriate in the light of your own circumstances.

Depending upon the particular circumstances of your situation, or if you do not feel confident about undertaking any suggested task, you should seek the advice of professional services.

**In any event, before undertaking any suggested task you should always contact your insurer.**

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