



## Returning To Your Home After Hurricane Katrina

When returning to your home after evacuation from Hurricane Katrina, please be aware of conditions that can cause health risks for you and your family.

### When You First Re-enter Your Home

- Keep children and pets out of flooded areas until cleanup has been completed. Pregnant women should exercise caution when entering flooded areas.
- If you have standing water in your home and can turn off the main power from a dry location, then go ahead and turn off the power, even if it delays cleaning. If you must enter standing water to access the main power switch, call an electrician or the power company to turn it off. **NEVER turn power on or off yourself or use an electric tool or appliance while standing in water.**
- Have an electrician check the house's electrical system before turning the power on again.
- Natural gas or propane tanks should be shut off to avoid fire or explosions. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately. Notify the gas company or the police or fire departments or State Fire Marshal's office. **Do not turn on the lights or do anything that could cause a spark.** Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe to do so.
- Consult your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators. Be aware that it is against the law and a violation of electrical codes to connect generators to your home's electrical circuits without the approved, automatic-interrupt devices. **Never operate a generator indoors, or in an enclosed or partially enclosed structure. Such improper use can create dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide and cause carbon monoxide poisoning.**
- Most homes in the area have been closed up for several days, and many have had water inside for a long period of time. If the house has been closed up for several days, enter briefly to open doors and windows to let the house air out for awhile (at least 30 minutes) before you stay inside for any length of time.
- Your home may be contaminated with sewage. Wear rubber boots and rubber gloves.
- If your home has been flooded and has been closed up for several days, presume your home is contaminated with mold. Consider wearing a N95 designated face mask, rubber gloves and goggles. See Fact Sheet on protecting yourself from mold.

### Dry Out Your House

- If you have electricity and an electrician has determined that it's safe to turn it on, use a "wet-dry" shop vacuum, an electric-powered water transfer pump, or sump pump to remove any remaining standing water. If you are operating equipment in wet areas, be sure to wear rubber boots.

- If you do not have electricity, or it is not safe to turn it on, you can use a portable generator to power equipment to remove standing water.
- If weather permits, open windows and doors of the house to aid in the drying-out process.
- Use fans and dehumidifiers to remove excess moisture. Fans should be placed at a window or door to blow the air outwards rather than inwards, so as not to spread the mold. As the water recedes, dust and residue will be left behind. This will be disturbed and blown around by the use of fans. Persons with asthma or other respiratory illnesses should avoid the area until cleanup has been completed.
- Have your home heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system checked and cleaned by a maintenance or service professional **before you turn it on**. See Fact Sheet on protecting yourself from mold. If the HVAC system was flooded with water, turning on the mold-contaminated HVAC will spread mold throughout the house. When it is safe to do so, you can turn it on and use it to help remove excess moisture from your home.
- If you have a basement, ensure that crawl spaces have proper drainage to limit water seepage.

## Cleanup

- Keep children and pets out of the flooded area until cleanup has been completed. Pregnant women should exercise caution when entering flooded areas.
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of affected area.
- Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected (such as, mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and most paper products).
- Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters.
- Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (such as flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, and other plumbing fixtures) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent and disinfect with a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water.
- After completing the cleanup, wash your hands with soap and water. Use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands).
  - You may also use water that has been disinfected for personal hygiene use (solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, use a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Wash all clothes worn during the cleanup in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from uncontaminated clothes and linens.
- Wash clothes contaminated with flood or sewage water in hot water and detergent. It is recommended that a laundromat be used for washing large quantities of clothes and linens until your onsite waste-water system has been professionally inspected and serviced.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.

*Adapted by the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals from the US Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, September 15, 2005.*

*For more information, visit <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>*

*Or call the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals at 1-888-293-7020*