

Safe Cleanup After the Flood

Release Date: November 13, 2017

ORLANDO, Fla. – If your home was flooded by Hurricane Irma and the floodwaters are just beginning to recede, there are steps to take to ensure that your cleanup process is safe.

First call your insurance agent to file a claim and report the damage as soon as possible. Homeowners insurance usually covers losses caused by wind, storms, or broken water pipes, but not surface flooding, which is covered under a separate policy issued under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Make sure you register for assistance with FEMA.

Cleaning Up After Hurricane Irma Flooding

- Personal safety is always the highest priority when entering buildings damaged by floodwater.
- Check for structural damage before re-entering your home to avoid being trapped in a building collapse.
- Keep power off until an electrician has inspected your system for safety.
- Turn off the gas. Be alert for gas leaks.
- Look before you step. After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris, including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.
- Take photos of any floodwater in your home and of damaged items for insurance purposes.
- Rescue the most valuable items, but never attempt to salvage belongings at the expense of your own safety.
- Wear long sleeves, sturdy shoes or waterproof boots, and plastic or rubber gloves during cleanup.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water or use a hand-cleaning gel with alcohol in it.
- Mold can form within 48 hours; you will need to work fast. The goal is to reduce the humidity and temperature around your treasures as you proceed to clean



and dry them. If you do encounter extensive mold, use protective gear such as gloves, goggles, and an N95 or N100 face mask, available at most hardware stores.

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers guidelines for mold cleanup after floods.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides a number of helpful resources, including www.cdc.gov/disasters/returnhome.html about returning home safely after a disaster; and www.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.html about hazards you may encounter when cleaning up inside and outside your home.

Filing Your NFIP Flood Insurance Claim After Hurricane Irma

- Report your loss immediately to your insurance agent.
- Ask about advance payments, which are being granted to eligible policyholders.
- Go online to see how to file your flood claim.

A step-by-step infographic about how to file a claim also is available online.

FEMA provides access to disaster help and resources at www.disasterassistance.gov/.

For more recovery information, visit www.FEMA.gov/IrmaFL, or follow us @FEMARegion4 on Twitter and on FEMA's Facebook page.

###

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive



SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

###

