



## Salvaging After Flooding

### ■ Recovery and Salvage: What Can Be Salvaged, What Cannot

The purpose of this document is to give an overview of those materials that can be salvaged and those that cannot and how to make some decisions. Floodwaters from an overflowing body of water will likely deposit mud and silt throughout the building and within enclosures, such as electrical appliances, switches, cabinets, etc. This makes thorough cleanup difficult, since the silt may contain toxins and biohazards. A detailed discussion of cleanup and salvage is available in the resources listed below.

### ■ Absorbent Materials

Floodwater is considered to be contaminated with biological and chemical contaminants. As a general rule, soft absorbent materials must be dried out within 48 hours (this period may extend to 72 hours in cooler conditions and may be shortened in warmer temperatures.) This has to do with mold growth. Mold cells reproduce quickly, often doubling in a matter of hours. This process goes faster when temperatures are warmer.

- **Carpet:** Since flood water is contaminated, salvaging flooded carpet involves more than drying. Carpeting can sometimes be saved if it can be cleaned by a professional.
- **Mattresses:** It is unlikely that mattresses can be adequately dried.
- **Upholstered furniture:** It is unlikely that upholstery can be adequately cleaned and dried soon enough. It may be possible to salvage the frame and re-upholster the piece, but first decide if the piece is worth salvaging.
- **Wood furniture:** Solid wood furniture can often be saved if it is not severely damaged. It may be necessary to disassemble and re-glue. Refinishing may also be necessary. Cleaning and drying are essential first steps. Further repairs can be done at a later time. Veneered furniture repairs involve considerable time and skill and are best left to professionals unless damage is slight. Replacement may be the better choice unless the piece has special monetary or sentimental value.

### ■ Hard, Non-Absorbent Goods

These can usually be cleaned, dried, and salvaged.

- Electrical Appliances:

- Be extremely cautious! Plugging in an appliance that has not completely dried can deliver a fatal shock. Opening up some appliances, such as TV sets, can pose a shock hazard even when the device is not plugged in.
- Unplug the appliance before working on it; make sure that power to the house is off before unplugging or touching the appliance. Before power is turned back on, unplug all appliances that have gotten wet. Flooding can cause short circuits that can later deliver a fatal shock.
- Appliances that have been submerged generally cannot be salvaged. It may be possible to repair those that have gotten wet by rainwater but were not flooded.
- Small appliances, or older, large appliances are generally not worth salvaging.
- Electronic appliances, TV sets, audio equipment, media players generally cannot be salvaged.

Restoration of an appliance involves two basic steps: cleaning and drying the device itself and cleaning and drying the motor, switches and controls. Cleaning and drying will be complicated if fibrous insulation (such as fiberglass, found in some stoves, refrigerators, etc.) has gotten wet. Motors and other components will need to be disassembled. All repaired appliances must be tested by a qualified individual before being put back into service.

*Source: NDSU Extension Service - [http://www.extension.org/pages/Salvaging\\_After\\_Flooding](http://www.extension.org/pages/Salvaging_After_Flooding)*