



## Cleaning Up After a Flood: FAQs

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends that people avoid contact with flood water due to potentially elevated levels of contamination associated with raw sewage and other hazardous or toxic substances that may be in the flood water.

### What should I do if there is sewage contamination in my home after flood waters recede?

First contact your local officials to determine if there are professional resources available for assistance or to get referrals for qualified contractors who can provide professional cleaning assistance. Make sure you document any damage with the **Federal Emergency Management Agency: 1-800-621-3362 and your insurance company.**

### How do I clean carpet or rugs?

If the carpet or rug cannot be thoroughly dried and cleaned, it should be discarded and replaced. If the damaged area is small enough, you may be able to save the carpet by cleaning the area with detergent. You may also choose to consult a professional home cleaning service.

### How can I clean up external areas?

UV radiation from sunlight reduces the survival rate of pathogens outdoors. A disinfectant may be used on tarmac and paved areas. Contamination of grass or turf will degrade naturally over time.

### How should I clean up?

Prior to undertaking cleanup efforts, take proper precautions to limit your contact with flood waters:

- Keep children and pets away from flood and sewage water.
- Wear protective gear such as rubber gloves, boots, goggles, a mask with an N-95 respirator (available at most hardware stores), long pants and long-sleeve shirts.
- Protect all cuts and scrapes. Immediately wash and disinfect any wound that comes into contact with flood water or sewage.
- Remove excess water, use active ventilation and dehumidifiers whenever possible.
- Discard upholstered furniture, mattresses or other soft or porous items that were wet with flood water and cannot be disinfected.
- Affected surfaces that are non-porous should be washed with soap and water then cleaned with a mix of 1 cup of household liquid bleach in 5 gallons of water. Use bleach that does not have an added scent (like lemon). Scrub rough surfaces with a stiff brush and air dry.
- Never mix bleach with ammonia or other cleaners.
- Paneling and wallboard must be immediately cleaned and dried thoroughly. If the damage is severe, it may be necessary to remove and replace the damaged sections.

### Following Cleanup:

- Wash your hands and body thoroughly with soap and water.
- Wash all clothes worn during the cleanup in hot water with detergent and separate them from uncontaminated clothes and linens.
- Disinfect boots, gloves and all cleaning items if you choose to re-use them.
- When finished, disinfect your waterproof boots and gloves with a solution of one-half cup household bleach in one gallon of water. Rinse with clear water and allow boots and gloves to dry.

For more information:  
EPA Regional Public Liaison  
George Zachos  
888-283-7626  
[www.epa.gov/sandy](http://www.epa.gov/sandy)

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation:  
518-402-8678

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Hotline:  
877-WARN-DEP (877-927-6337)