

Structural Protection of Water Damaged/Flooded Homes

A Guide for Homeowners

1. **For more information on this topic, read the following Government Guidelines and Recommendations: FEMA 'What Should I do After a Flood'. CDC 'Flood Safety Fact Sheet'. EPA Fact Sheet 'Flood Clean Up'. American Red Cross and FEMA 'Repairing Your Flooded Home'.**
2. **Hire a locally licensed and insured pest control operator.** A licensed and insured pest control operator (PCO) will have training and certification approved by your state and will use EPA registered products.
3. **If your home has not been flooded:** The moisture content (%MC) of wood in all walls, in subfloors and roofs needs to be checked. A PCO will use a specialized piece of equipment called a moisture meter to measure the moisture content of structural materials. The moisture content in a dry home will be less than 20%. If the moisture content is above 25%, follow the recommendations for flooded homes below. If the wood is above 20% MC, immediately dry home until the wood is less than 20% MC using dehumidification or dry heat and ventilation. Consider hiring a local PCO to treat your home with a termiticide to give you long-term structural protection of your home.
4. **If home has been flooded:** Remove all water, mud, silt, and wet or damaged non-structural debris (carpet, furniture, curtains, garbage, etc.) from all flooded areas. Pressure wash and pump out if necessary.
5. All sheet rock and insulation should be removed to a height of three feet above the flooded area or to a height of three feet above a 25% moisture content reading, whichever is highest. **Removal of materials can disrupt potentially harmful materials and be made airborne. Proper protective equipment may be necessary.**
6. Clean and/or remove all visible debris and mold on all structural wood.
7. If there is evidence of visible sewage or if laboratory tests shows bacterial contamination, consider hiring a professional to thoroughly clean and disinfect with an appropriate EPA registered disinfectant, sanitizer and virucide.
8. Obvious signs of rot or termites must be repaired and should be treated by a local PCO. A PCO can treat all structural components with an EPA registered and labeled wood preservative (to prevent wood rot, termites and carpenter ants). The wood should be dried to less than 20% wood moisture content within 48 hours using dehumidification or dry heat and ventilation. If immediate drying is not possible, a PCO can add an EPA registered and labeled moldicide and mildewcide to a wood preservative treatment.
9. When the home is repaired and dry (weatherproof roof and exterior walls) and the wood moisture content remains below 20%, replacement of the insulation and sheetrock may be carried out, and the homeowners may return.
10. Consider a professional pest control annual or biannual inspection to maintain the structural integrity of your home.

Note: Only EPA registered pesticides (disinfectants, wood preservatives and moldicides/mildewcides) can be used, and only properly licensed, trained and insured pest control professionals can be used for any such pesticide application in homes.