

Getting Back Into Your Home

Q: What do I do based on the placard posted on my home?

A: The Department is inspecting buildings affected by Hurricane Sandy and placing green, yellow or red placards on these buildings to let residents know about the conditions of their buildings. All placards must remain in place until the Department announces that they can be removed. Below are meanings of the different placards:

- **Green:** No apparent structural hazards were observed; you are not restricted from entering and re-occupying your building. However, inspectors might not have been able to gain access to all parts of your building, and some hazardous conditions may still exist, such as flooding. If you have evidence that damage to your building is significant, please contact the Department by calling 311 to schedule a re-inspection.
- **Yellow:** There are restrictions. The property is damaged; entry limitations are specified on each placard. Please consult the conditions listed on the placard with regards to what repairs are needed. Based on this information, you may need to hire a New York State licensed professional (Registered Architect or Professional Engineer) to file plans with the Department and hire a contractor to make the necessary repairs.
 - Nonstructural damage can lead to the posting of a yellow placard, including but not limited to, a compromised electrical system, the loss of basic sanitary facilities due to broken water or sewer pipes, or life safety systems, including but not limited to, fire alarms, sprinklers, standpipes and carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. Other situations can involve localized structural damage that can make a portion of a building unsafe while other areas remain usable.
 - If your building was tagged with a yellow placard because the basement is flooded, you can pump out the water if no structural conditions are indicated on the placard and your electrical company confirms the electrical power supply to your building has been turned off. However, a flooded basement may conceal hazards.
- **Red:** The building is unsafe. The property is seriously damaged and is unsafe to enter or occupy. A red placard is not an order to demolish. You should hire a New York State-licensed professional (Registered Architect or Professional Engineer) to file plans with the Department and hire a contractor to make the necessary repairs.
- If your building has not been tagged with a placard, this means your building has not been inspected or it was inspected and the Department did not find any apparent structural hazards to the buildings on your block. In cases where no apparent structural hazards were observed to blocks, one green placard will be posted in a prominent location on that block. If you have evidence that damage to your building is significant, please contact the Department by calling 311 to schedule an inspection.
- Once all hazardous conditions have been corrected, please email the Department for a re-inspection at stormhelp@buildings.nyc.gov. You should attach to the email any documents or photographs demonstrating that the hazardous conditions have been corrected. If the repairs required work by a licensed electrician, plumber, fire suppression contractor, architect or engineer, you should include a statement from them indicating the hazardous conditions have been corrected. After the Department has re-inspected your building and determined all the hazardous conditions have been corrected, the Department will remove the red or yellow placards from your building.

Q: How do I get my electricity turned back on?

A: If the utility company has determined your property has sustained damage to the electrical system and will not restore power to your property, you need to hire a licensed electrician to inspect your building's electrical system.

- **No Damage:** If your electrician determines there was no damage to your building's electrical system, he/she must submit a letter to your utility company stating there are no problems with the electrical system in order to have your power restored. Upon receipt of this letter, your utility company will turn your power back on.
- **Damage:** If your electrician determines there was damage to your building's electrical system, he/she must make the necessary repairs and submit a letter to your utility company certifying there was damage and the necessary repairs were made to have your power restored. Upon receipt of this letter, your utility company will turn your power back on.

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(damage continued) Your electrician can perform the repair work immediately without having to file an application and obtain permits from the Department. However, the [necessary applications](#) must be filed with the Department within two business days of commencing work.

Note: In most cases, any electrical wiring that came into contact with salt water will be required to be removed and replaced. Dried salt can be a conductor of electricity and cause an electrical fault or a fire. A licensed electrician may be able to disconnect the affected wiring branches to permit equipment in the rest of the building to be returned to service.

Q: How do I get my gas turned on?

A: If your gas was shutoff as a result of the storm, you need to hire a licensed plumber to inspect your gas equipment.

- **No Damage:** If your plumber determines there was no damage to your gas equipment, he/she must submit a letter to your utility company stating there are no problems with the gas equipment in order to have your gas restored. Upon receipt of this letter, your utility company will turn your gas back on.
- **Damage:** If your plumber determines there was damage to your gas equipment, he/she must make the necessary repairs and submit a letter to your utility company certifying there was damage and the necessary repairs were made to have your gas restored. Upon receipt of this letter, your utility company will turn your gas back on. Your plumber can perform the repair work immediately without having to file an application and obtain permits from the Department. However, the [necessary applications](#) must be filed with the Department within two business days of commencing work.

Helpful Hints for Homeowners

- Before re-entering buildings, check for structural damage that could affect the building's stability. Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- If you smell gas, you should call 911 and your gas utility company.
- Stay away from breaker boxes in flooded basements or areas.
- Do not go into flooded basements if electrical wires are present.
- Turn off electricity at the main breaker or fuse box, even if the power is off in your community. Then you can re-energize the power when it is safe to do so.
- If water entered your heating or mechanical equipment, be sure to have it inspected by a qualified service technician prior to returning it to service. Failure to do so could produce a shock, endangering your life and may destroy equipment.
- Generators used to power a house should not be connected until after all compromised wiring has been disconnected or replaced.
- If there is still water in your building, pump it out gradually, about one-third of the water per day, to avoid structural damage
- Dry all areas and items quickly and thoroughly to prevent mold growth.
- Clean and disinfect all damp items and materials. Mud left from floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.
- If your building was damaged by Hurricane Sandy, you should register with FEMA and consult your homeowner insurance company.