



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
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*Commissioner*

## Major Flood Damage and Mold: How to Make Repairs Safely and Effectively

Homes impacted by flooding from Hurricane Sandy require special attention to address mold growth. Mold may be a health risk to you, your family and anyone cleaning up and removing debris.

### Recognize the Problem

- Flood-damaged homes may already have extensive mold growth. Mold needs water and a food source to grow. It comes in many different colors, may look furry, slimy, or powdery, and often smells musty, stale, or earthy. The type of mold present does not affect how it should be cleaned.
- Mold can grow on ceiling tiles, wood products, paint, wallpaper, carpeting, sheetrock, clothing, furniture and other materials. Aside from obvious areas where mold is visible, inspect hidden areas for discoloration, mold growth and odors, such as crawl spaces, attics, and behind wallboards or paneling. Look also at carpet backing and padding, wallpaper, moldings (*e.g.*, baseboards), and insulation.
- Check the home's exterior and under/behind siding to look for damage and wetness. You may have to remove the siding to allow the structure to dry out thoroughly.
- Isolate wet, moldy, and work areas from living spaces in your home with plastic sheeting and duct tape.
- Consider hiring a professional to do the cleanup and repairs if your home has extensive damage.

### Remove and Clean Damaged Building Materials

- Remove moldy building materials right away. Do not fog or spray as a way to treat or prevent mold growth.
- Dry out affected areas as soon as possible. Open windows, use fans if available, and remove and discard porous building materials that got wet.
- Discard or thoroughly clean and dry any water-damaged materials such as rugs, furniture, or clothing with detergent and water.
- In general, discard damaged or porous building materials, including ceiling tiles, wall paneling, insulation, and drywall/sheetrock. Remove at least 6 inches above any wet, damaged or moldy areas of building materials.
- Asbestos may be found in insulation material around old pipes and boilers. If you're not sure if the damaged insulation or other building materials contain asbestos, contact a licensed asbestos contractor. Do not remove it yourself. Strict regulations require special procedures to protect workers and minimize asbestos contamination.
- Clean moldy, non-porous materials such as metal, glass, and hard plastic with water and detergent, such as liquid dish detergent. Wood, furniture, concrete, and other semi-porous or porous materials can be cleaned if they are structurally sound or undamaged.

- Surfaces that were touched by flood water or sewage may need disinfection. Use diluted bleach (one cup household bleach added to two gallons of water) only on the areas that need it. Do not use full strength bleach or mix bleach with other cleaning products.
- Leave walls open until they dry out to prevent sealing in moisture. Do not replace walls, siding, tiles, sheetrock or other items until all building materials, such as insulation and internal wall framework, are fully dry and clean.
- Put discarded material in sealed plastic bags and throw away with the regular trash.
- After the repairs are done, all areas should be left dry and visibly free of mold, dust, and debris. Damp areas, bubbling or peeling paint, recurring mold growth, or musty odors may indicate a persistent problem.

### **Do the Work Safely**

Dust from building materials and mold can be irritating to the eyes, throat, and lungs.

- Keep children and pets out of work areas at all times.
- Open windows and doors to air out the area as much as possible while cleaning.
- To protect the rest of the home from dust, try to work one room or one area at a time.
- Contain the work area so that dust does not escape from the area. Cover floors and furniture with heavy-duty plastic and tape, and seal off doors and heating and cooling system vents.
- Don't dry sand, sweep, or scrape. Do wet down surfaces with a dilute detergent and water solution in a spray bottle before sanding, scraping or removing sheetrock or other building materials. If available, use HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) vacuum-shrouded tools or a vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- Mop floors and spray down plastic covers before removing plastic from doors, windows, and vents.
- Wear an N-95 respirator and safety glasses or goggles if cleaning will produce dust. N-95s fit the face and nose, and provide better protection. Wear rubber gloves and head protection.
- Do NOT run any electrical equipment or appliances near standing water or on wet materials.
- After completing the work: Wash up, remove and change shoes and clothes before entering clean areas of the home. Wash the clothes used to do the work separately from other laundry
- Wash your hands with soap and water especially before eating or drinking.

### **Contact Your Insurance Agent**

- If you are applying for disaster assistance or filing an insurance claim, take photos of all damage before cleaning up and keep receipts of all repairs. For more information about submitting a claim, contact your insurance provider.
- Contact the New York State Insurance Department, Consumer Services Bureau if you have complaints about your insurance provider: 800-342-3736.

**For more information visit a NYC Restoration Center or call 311.**

The New City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments are available at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/moldrpt1.shtml>

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# What to Do About Mold in Flood Damaged Homes

1. **Protect yourself** by wearing an N95 respirator, rubber gloves, and washable work clothes when doing repairs. Mold can trigger asthma and allergies.
2. **Isolate wet/moldy/work areas** from living areas.
3. **Ventilate** the work area with open windows and fans.
4. **Remove wet sheetrock**, carpeting, furnishings and other building materials to prevent mold growth.
5. **Reduce dust** by wetting down flood and mold-damaged materials before removal and disposal.
6. **Clean off mold** from metal, glass and other hard surfaces with detergent and water.
7. **Use dilute bleach** on surfaces contacted by flood waters or sewage. One cup bleach per 2 gallons of water is best.
8. **Dry out your home** before replacing walls and flooring. Use dehumidifiers, ventilation and heating.
9. **Consider getting professional help** if mold growth is extensive.
10. **For more information, call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health).**

