

DRY OUT YOUR HOME

Floodwaters affect a house in 3 ways:

1. The water damages materials. Wallboard will disintegrate if it stays wet too long; wood can swell, warp, or rot; electrical parts can short out, malfunction, and cause fires or shock.
2. Mud, silt, and unknown contaminants in the water not only get everything dirty; they are also unhealthy.
3. Dampness promotes the growth of mildew, a mold or fungus that can grow on everything.

The following steps work on all three of these problems. It is very important to do these steps in order.

Lower the Humidity

Everything will dry more quickly and clean more easily if you can reduce the humidity in the house. There are many ways to lower the humidity and stop the rot and mildew. But you'll have to delay using some methods if you have no electricity.

- **Open up the house.** If the humidity outside is lower than it is indoors, and if the weather permits, open all the doors and windows to exchange the moist indoor air for drier outdoor air. Your body will tell you if the humidity is lower outdoors. If the sun is out, it should be drier outside. If you have a thermometer with a humidity gauge, you can monitor the indoor and outdoor humidity.

On the other hand, when temperatures drop at night, an open house is warmer and will draw moisture indoors. At night, and at other times when the humidity is higher outdoors, close up the house.

- **Open closet and cabinet doors.** Remove drawers to let air circulate. Drawers may stick because of swelling. Don't try to force them. Help them dry by opening up the back of the cabinet so air can get into it. You will probably be able to remove the drawers as the cabinet dries out.
- **Use fans.** Fans help move the air and dry out your home. Do not use central air conditioning or the furnace blower if the ducts were under water. They will blow out dirty air that might contain contaminants from the sediment left in the duct work. Clean or hose out the ducts first.
- **Run dehumidifiers.** Dehumidifiers and window air conditioners will reduce the