

Put things you don't want to save outside to dry until the adjuster comes to confirm your losses. Take pictures or videotapes and list each item for the record.

Garbage

Get rid of food and anything else that could spoil or go bad immediately. Do not let garbage build up. Garbage piles will cause yet another health hazard by attracting animals and insects. If your insurance adjuster has not come, tell your agent or adjuster that you need to get rid of potential health hazards. That person will tell you how to make sure that your losses are covered. Then throw the stuff out, preferably in sealed plastic garbage bags.

Do not take chances with frozen food if the electricity went off unless the food is still thoroughly frozen and contains ice crystals. As a rule, food will remain frozen for up to 3 days in a closed freezer without power. Do not refreeze thawed food. However, you can cook raw meat that was partially thawed and then freeze it.

Dispose of discarded items properly. Do not burn or bury them. There will usually be more frequent garbage pickups after a flood. Your local newspapers or local TV and radio stations will have announcements about trash pickup schedules and drop-off sites.

How Floodwaters Affect Your Home

Once contents and debris have been cleared, the next step is to get the water out of the ceilings and walls. How you drain and dry your ceilings and walls depends on what they are made of.

Wallboard

Most ceilings and walls are covered with wallboard, especially in newer homes. Wallboard acts like a sponge, drawing water up above the flood level. It becomes very fragile if it stays wet for long and will fall apart when bumped. When the wallboard finally dries, there will still be mud and contaminants dried inside.

Wallboard that has been soaked by floodwater can be a permanent health hazard. Therefore, this booklet recommends that you throw out flooded wallboard. On the other hand, if the wallboard was soaked by clean rainwater, it can be dried in place with plenty of fresh air moving through the area.

Plaster

Plaster will survive a flood better than wallboard. You should not need to replace it, but it will take a very long time to dry.