

Sometimes the plaster will separate from its wood laths as it dries. Then the wall will have to be removed and replaced.

Insulation

There are three main types of insulation, and each reacts differently to floodwaters. Styrofoam survives best; it may only need to be hosed off.

Fiberglass batts should be thrown out if they are muddy. If soaked by clean rainwater, remove them so the rest of the wall can dry. They can be put back in the wall, but it will take a very long time for them to dry.

Cellulose (loose or blown-in treated paper) insulation holds water for a long time. It can also lose its antifungal and fire retardant abilities. Therefore, flooded cellulose insulation should be replaced.

Wood

If it is allowed to dry naturally, wood will usually regain its original shape. Different layers of laminated wood, such as plywood, may dry at different rates, and that may cause the layers to separate.

Some contaminants will stay in the wood after it dries, but not as much as stays in flooded wallboard. Wood studs and sills will be covered by new wallboard and painted, so they are well removed from human contact. Therefore, wet wood studs and sills do not need to be replaced if they are allowed to dry properly.

Drain the Ceilings and Walls

Ceilings

Check for sagging ceilings. Drain them carefully. If the floodwaters went above your ceiling, you should replace it if it is made of wallboard. A plaster ceiling will dry eventually, but if it has too many cracks or sags, you will have to tear it down and replace it. Remove any wet insulation in the ceiling to allow the joists to dry.

Walls

Remove water trapped within your walls. To check for water, take off the baseboard. Stick an awl or knife into the wall about 2 inches above the floor (just above the 2 x 4 wood sill plate). If water drips out, cut or drill a hole large enough to allow water to drain freely. (Use a hand or cordless drill or saw to avoid shock.) If you are going to replace the wallboard anyway, you don't have to be neat: use a hammer to knock out a hole.

If your walls are plaster, a knife won't penetrate them. Drill a hole above the sill plate to drain the water. (Use a hand or cordless drill to avoid shock.) Do not use a hammer