

Vinyl wall covering seals the wall and keeps it from drying out. Wallpaper paste is also a favorite home for mold and mildew. For these reasons, you should remove all wall covering that got wet and throw it out. (If vinyl wall covering is loose on the bottom, you may be able to save it by pulling it off the wall up to the flood level. Clean and reapply it after everything dries).

### **Paneling**

Carefully pry the bottom of each panel away from the wall. Use something to hold the bottom away from the sill so the cavities can drain and dry out. You can nail them back into shape after they and the studs dry out. However, if there is wet insulation, you will have to remove the paneling in order to take out all the insulation.

### **Dry the Floor**

Air needs to move around flooded floors so they can dry out. This usually means that you must remove the floor covering. Because floodwaters contain mud and dirt, most soaked floor coverings should be thrown away. Keep a piece of all discarded floor covering so the adjuster can tell its value.

Air needs to circulate below the floor to dry it out. If the crawl space of your house is flooded, pump it out. Remove any plastic sheets, vapor barriers, or insulation from underneath the floor. (Be sure to replace them when the floor and foundation are completely dry.)

If a house with a basement was flooded over the first floor, remove finished basement ceilings, or cut or drill holes between all the joists to allow circulation. Don't cut or drill near electric lines or pipes.

You have now reached the stage where your home should be protected from further damage. Outside holes have been patched, the utilities have been turned off, and the drying process has started. It may take days or weeks, depending on the humidity, for all the wood and walls to dry out. Patience now will prevent you having to do everything over again.