

Tips for Cleaning Various Household Items

If important antiques, collectibles or family heirlooms are damaged by water, immediately contact a conservator who specializes in restoration and repair. Anything you salvage must be disinfected. Research online how best to salvage, clean and disinfect your specific items.

The information below includes general recommendations on how to clean some common household items, but is not a guaranteed cure-all.



Furniture

With upholstered furniture, clean, dry and remove all mildew. The padding and upholstery may need to be replaced and the springs cleaned and oiled. With wood furniture, remove back panels, drawers and doors if they can easily be removed. Clean the inside and outside. Dry the furniture—it may take weeks—in a well ventilated area but not in the sun. Remove any mildew or mold that develops.



Clothing & Fabric

Sort washable fabrics from dry clean only ones. Separate the washable white from colored fabric. Rinse off as much mud as possible. If you cannot wash the clothes immediately, spread them out to dry to prevent mildew and mold growth. Before washing your fabrics, disinfect your washing machine if it has come into contact with floodwater by filling it with hot water, adding a cup of chlorine bleach and running a full cycle. Wash your clothes using the hottest water possible for the fabric. During the first wash, to disinfect the fabric, add a cup of chlorine bleach to white cotton fabrics. For other fabrics add a cup of Pine Sol or Lysol. If the fabric is still stained, try soaking it overnight or using stain removal products and then wash again with regular laundry detergent. Drying the fabric in a dryer at the highest heat setting kills bacteria.

With dry clean only fabrics, determine if the cost of dry cleaning is cheaper than a replacement. If the fabric is coated in mud, use a hose to rinse it. Allow it to air dry (not in the sun) and then take it to a professional dry cleaner as soon as you can.



Books

Wrap wet books in waxed paper and store in a freezer. When you are ready to work on them, let the books thaw and then place paper towel between the front and back covers and every few pages in between. Keep changing the paper. Keep the books in a well ventilated room. When the book is almost all dry, lay it down, put more paper towel in it and then put a weight on top.



Artwork

Remove artwork from the outer frame but not from the stretcher. If it is stuck to glass, do not peel it off. Dry art face-up and on top of a paper towel. Change the paper towel regularly. Never touch the paint or apply heat to it.



Photographs

Remove wet photos from boxes, albums and frames (if a framed photo is stuck to the glass, leave it as is and do not peel it off). Try not to touch the image. Rinse off any mud and debris. If photos are stuck together, soak them in clean water to loosen them. Stack the wet photos with a sheet of wax paper between each one. Put them in plastic bags and place in the freezer. Thaw out the pictures when you are ready to fully clean and dry them. If the photo is still dirty, soak it or rinse it in clean water. Do not rub or blot the photo. Dry each photo (photo side up) flat on a paper towel. Regularly change the paper towel. If a photo curls, a professional can flatten it. Once the photos are fully dry you can store them as you wish.



Electronic Equipment & Devices

Remove any electronic equipment from the water immediately. Make sure that your circuit breaker is switched off. If your device is plugged in, unplug it; if it has a removable battery, memory card or SIM card, remove them. If your device has been in salty or muddy water, rinse carefully with fresh water. Use a soft cloth towel to dry off the exterior. For lenses and screens use a lens cloth or microfiber cloth. Submerge your smaller devices in uncooked rice or silica gel for at least 12 hours (larger items may need to be submerged for several days). If in doubt, take the item to a repair shop to see if it can be fixed and how the repair costs compare to the replacement cost. With larger appliances it is always a good idea to have an electrician or appliance technician check the appliances to see if it is possible and cost effective to repair them.

Charleston County Building Inspection Services

4045 Bridge View Drive, Suite A311

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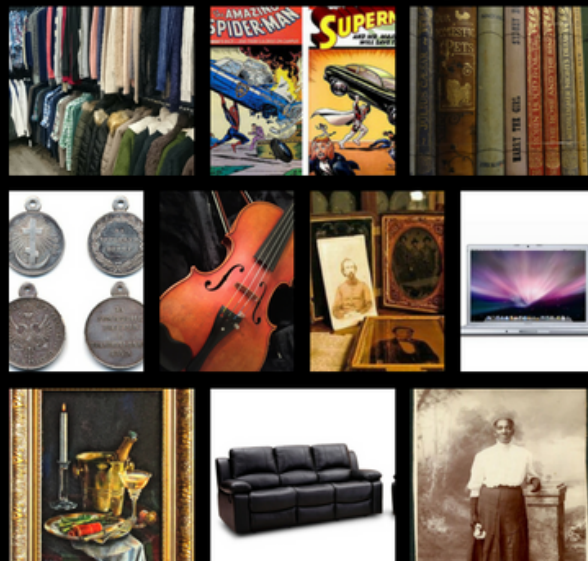
(843) 202-6930

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Safeguard Your Personal Property from Flooding



Flooding: The Risk is Real

Given the Lowcountry's low elevation, coastal location, frequency of heavy rain and risk of tropical storms and hurricanes, flooding is a serious threat to everyone. Even those not living close to the water are at risk.



Flooding poses a threat to personal health, physical safety and to the security of your home. Additionally, your personal belongings—furniture, clothing, children's toys, electronic equipment, books, artwork, antiques, collectibles, keepsakes, family photographs and heirlooms—are at risk for being damaged or destroyed.

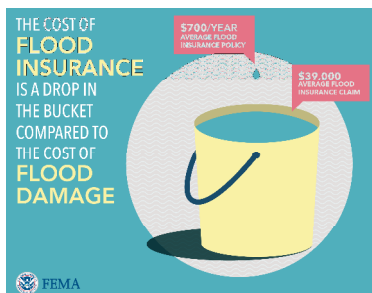
Floods can be devastating. Many families have lost their homes and belongings. Some have lost their lives. It doesn't take much; just a few inches of flood water can cause serious and permanent damage.

Protect Your Home from Flooding

One of the first steps to protecting your personal belongings is to protect your home. To take the most appropriate flood prevention measures, you must understand your home's flood risk. Your local jurisdiction can help you understand your risk and also make recommendations on the best flood prevention measures for your property. Check the internet for additional flood protection recommendations.

Purchase Flood Insurance

Flood insurance is one of the best protections for a building and its contents. Usually, homeowners insurance does not cover floods. Only flood insurance covers flood. Flood insurance is available to owners and renters of residential and commercial property under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) or private carriers and can be purchased through a licensed insurance agent. Contact your insurance agent or visit [FloodSmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov) for information.



Be Proactive: Prepare While You Have Time

Take steps now to protect your personal belongings.

Inventory and photograph your home's contents, particularly your most valuable possessions. Store this information in a safe place (e.g. in the online digital cloud, safe deposit box, etc.). The more comprehensive the list, the better. Include receipts, if available, to help expedite repairs or replacement.

Annually, review your flood policy with your insurance agent to ensure you have adequate coverage. If you remodel your home or make a large purchase, contact your agent to confirm you have the coverage you need.

Keep your valuable items elevated. If an item is particularly special to you, irreplaceable or too expensive to replace, keep it on a higher floor or elevate it off the floor on a shelf. Store items in plastic containers sealed with tape. Additionally, do not keep important belongings near windows or on the top floor of your home. A broken window or damaged roof can allow water into your home and ruin your belongings.

Use the Digital Cloud. Make digital copies of photos, videos, music, documents and other paper keepsakes and store them online. Some popular places to securely store items online include: Google Drive, Dropbox.com, iCloud.com, etc.

Make copies of your important documents—mortgage papers, deed, passport, insurance policies, bank information, will—and store them in the digital cloud, in a safe deposit box or in your home in a watertight sealed plastic box on an elevated floor or shelf.

Have supplies ready so that you can act quickly if your home starts to flood. Plastic storage containers are useful for storing a variety of items including electronics like your computer, printer, camera, etc. Seal the boxes with packing tape. Large heavy duty plastic garbage bags can be useful to quickly move and protect clothing and household linens if waters rise. You may also want to keep waterproof plastic tarps handy to wrap furniture and other large items.



Don't let this happen to your belongings! Debris removal after Columbia, SC 2015 flood; courtesy of FEMA

What To Do After a Flood

Leave and alert the authorities if you think your home may be unsafe.

Ensure the electricity and gas are shut off to avoid fire or injury. Have an electrician check the house before turning it back on if it is damaged.

Throw away all food touched by floodwaters.

Boil water until authorities say it is safe to drink.

Contact your local jurisdiction to conduct a damage assessment inspection if your home is damaged.

Contact DHEC at (843) 953-0150 if your well or septic have been affected by floodwaters.

Contact your local jurisdiction for financial assistance information.

Call your insurance agent to begin your claim.

Photograph all damage to your home and belongings.

Make a list of all damaged items and include their value and receipts when possible.

Wear boots, gloves, goggles and a mask as you cleanup.

Decide what to save. Consider how badly the item is damaged, the sentimental value of it and the cost of replacing, cleaning and/or restoring the item.

Sort damaged from undamaged items.

Prevent mold and mildew growth by removing wet contents—drywall, insulation, baseboard, carpeting, rugs, furniture, bedding—as quickly as possible.

Clean any salvageable non-porous (non-absorbent) items with detergent or soap and water. Then, wipe down with a solution of bleach and water to disinfect.

Dry out your home as soon as possible: open all of your doors and windows in cool and low-humidity weather; use a portable dehumidifier (your flood policy may cover rental costs); run an air conditioner on the coldest setting; or turn your heat on as hot as you can.

