

After the Flood: Sealing Homes for Winter

This checklist was designed for families who experienced flooding and now want to close their home so rebuilding can begin in the spring.

WATER LINES

- Shut off the water supply at the main line.
- Remove all water fixtures, such as sinks, toilets, water heaters, and dishwashers.
- Open the water lines at the lowest point in the line and drain the lines.
- Use compressed air to blow all water from the lines (if needed).
- Cover the ends of open lines to prevent contamination, using appropriate fittings — either plastic, metal, or neoprene (rubber).

SANITARY LINES

- Remove all fixtures.
- Drain water from all traps; be certain no water remains that could freeze.
- SEAL ALL LINES INSIDE THE HOUSE TO PREVENT THE ENTRY OF SEWER GASES.
- LEAVE THE TOP VENT PIPES ABOVE THE ROOF OPEN TO ALLOW VENTING OF GAS.

(Note 1, sewer gases can be dangerous to breath and pose fire and explosion risks.)

(Note 2, a non-toxic antifreeze, propylene alcohol, is used to winterize recreational vehicles and is available from RV dealers.)

Preventing further water intrusion into the home is important. Roofs, walls, and foundations should be inspected, maintained, and repaired as necessary to prevent water from entering the home.

ROOFS

- Inspect the shingles, flashings, and water intrusion points. Replace or repair as needed.
- Clean and repair gutters.
- Add downspout extensions, if needed, to remove water a minimum of 5 feet, and preferably 8 feet, away from the home.

WALLS

- Close up openings in the sidewalls to prevent snow and rain from entering the structure.
- Use appropriate material to enclose the house. If the siding and sheathing have been removed, exposing the wall studs, consider resheathing the home.
- Before resheathing the home, be certain the wall studs are sufficiently dry. The preferable moisture content of the wood is 17% moisture content or less, and should not be greater than 20%. Higher moisture content increases the risk of mold growth.
- When resheathing the house, the sheathing can be applied over window and door openings — these can be cut out later when the installer is ready to replace windows and doors.
- All sheathing, if other wind bracing is not provided, must meet city building code requirements to provide sufficient wind bracing. Check with building code officials for specific requirements.
- Exposed stud walls, with no sheathing or other wind bracing, such as diagonal braces, do not offer sufficient resistance to wind loads and the house could collapse. Diagonal metal corner braces offer a simple, quick way to provide the needed support if sheathing is not installed.
- Cover sheathing with a suitable material, such as a breathable building wrap, to prevent water from damaging the sheathing, blowing into the home, or leaking into the house. Be careful to install the outer covering so water is diverted out of the structure and does not leak into the house.
- All broken windows should be covered, preferably with solid material, and caulking or flashing provided along the top of the covering to prevent the channeling of water into the structure.
- Siding and caulking should be inspected and repaired as needed to prevent water entry.

FOUNDATIONS

- ___ Close the openings and backfill against the foundation to prevent surface water and snow from entering the basement. Water entering the basement poses risks to the basement and will raise the moisture level throughout the house.
- ___ Grade soil away from the house
- ___ Leave a minimum of 12 inches, and preferably 18 inches, between the soil and the wood structure of the house.

BASEMENT DRAINAGE

- ___ Keep the basement dry.
- ___ Prevent standing water in the basement.

HEAT THE STRUCTURE, IF POSSIBLE.

- ___ Heating the structure with an approved listed natural gas furnace installed by a licensed mechanical contractor and inspected by the City Code Enforcement Division is recommended . Heating the structure will dry it out and help reduce or prevent water and mold damage.
- ___ Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors before operating a heating system.
- ___ Use only tested, safe heating systems.
- ___ DO NOT USE A HEATING UNIT THAT WAS FLOODED, EVEN IF IT WAS CLEANED AND APPEARS TO BE OPERATING CORRECTLY. IT CAN FAIL LATER.
- ___ DO NOT USE UNVENTED HEATING SYSTEMS THAT BURN FOSSIL FUELS. These release water vapor into the house. NEVER BURN CHARCOAL INDOORS.

SECURE THE STRUCTURE.

- ___ Install a locked door and cover all openings.