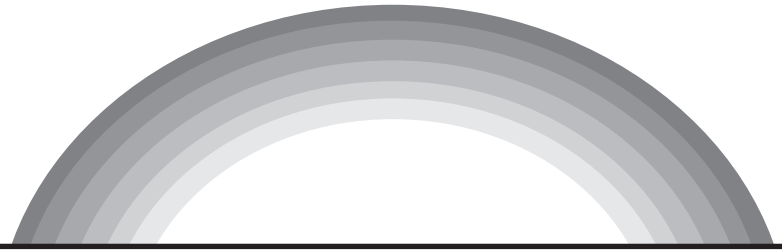


Disaster Recovery



Cleaning clothing and textiles

Cleaning your clothing and washable textiles may be the easiest part of your flood cleanup job. If you start right away, you can avoid mildew that can permanently damage clothes. Floodwater often is contaminated with sewage and can be a source of infectious disease, so soaked clothing and textiles must be thoroughly cleaned. Spend your time on favorite or more expensive items; however, some items may need to be discarded. Wear rubber gloves when handling flood-soaked clothing.

Drycleanables

Dryclean-only clothes (tailored or lined wool, silk, and some rayon and/or linen) should be allowed to air dry so they don't mildew before going to the cleaners. When dry, put items in clean plastic bags to take them to the cleaners.

Washable clothing and textiles

Take the following steps to clean:

- underwear, T-shirts
 - shirts, blouses, knit tops
 - cotton, ramie sweaters
 - spandex actionwear
 - coats, jackets, sweatshirts
 - skirts, dresses, aprons
 - jeans, trousers, shorts
 - socks, tennis shoes
 - bedding, towels
 - accent or throw rugs
 - kitchen or bath curtains
1. Hang items on a line or spread them out to dry, because you can't wash them all at once. Don't leave wet textiles in a heap—mildew will grow.
 2. If items have dried, shake out or brush off the loose dirt and dried mud.
 3. Separate light from dark colored items. Also, separate the wool knit sweaters and silk items to hand wash. (Follow the steps for "silk or wool items.") Dark colors, wools, and silks can bleed dye and permanently discolor lighter items.
 4. Presoak clothes in cold water before machine washing. Do not presoak in your washer. Curtains, blankets, accent rugs, and so on can be hung on a line and hosed down to remove mud.

5. If your washer has a pre-rinse cycle, pre-rinse items with cold water after you presoak them.
6. Use hot water and detergent when washing to help disinfect clothes; do not stuff too many items in one load.
7. Use the regular wash cycle and maximum water level. For permanent press or synthetics, use a permanent press cycle, with an automatic cool-down before spinning to prevent wrinkles.
8. Use heavy-duty liquid or powdered detergent and 1/2 cup of water conditioner, if available.
9. Put 1 cup liquid chlorine bleach in the wash water before adding clothes, or use the bleach dispenser for all white, light, and colorfast items. For front-loaders use 1/2 cup of bleach. Use an all-fabric bleach for other items. You can get small pinholes in clothes if you pour full-strength bleach on top of them. *Never mix bleach and ammonia-based cleaners.*
10. Heat kills germs, so tumble dry items using the regular dryer setting. If excess shrinkage is likely, hang items to dry in the sun.
11. Ironing also helps kill germs on cottons and cellulosic blends such as rayon. Steam pressing will kill germs in items that require air drying away from the sun, such as washable wools.

Silk or wool items

Many silks are dryclean only, but some are hand washable. To hand wash silk or wool:

1. Brush off loose soil, if dry.
2. Rinse in clear water in a bucket or basin. Lift out to drain off water; avoid wrinkling.
3. Hand wash in a basin of warm water. Use 1 to 2 tablespoons of heavy-duty liquid detergent. *Do not use chlorine bleach.* Allow to soak three minutes. Gently squeeze suds through the clothes. Do not rub or twist when wet.
4. Rinse thoroughly.
5. Hang silks to air dry.
6. "Block" or reshape wool sweaters to dry flat. Spread them on towels or plastic (such as a garbage bag or cleaner bag) on a flat surface.
7. Steam press carefully to help kill microbes and restore smooth appearance.

Blankets, bedspreads, quilts, and down-filled items

Follow the steps for washable clothing, except:

1. Use a liquid detergent; it rinses out better than powdered detergent.
2. Do not use an enzyme pre-wash for down-filled items such as coats, comforters, sleeping bags, or pillows. Enzymes attack down.
3. Use a gentle agitation cycle to prevent matting and shrinkage in fleece items.
4. Support quilts and down-filled items when lifting; the weight of the filling can rip the cover fabrics.
5. Line dry blankets, quilts, and bedspreads to avoid shrinkage and matting. Drape over two parallel lines to distribute the weight and keep items off the ground. Shorten drying time by turning items over when half dry.
6. Tumble dry down-filled items with dry towels (to absorb moisture), and some old tennis balls or small, clean tennis shoes (to break up the clumps of down as the dryer drum rotates). Or, line dry in the sun and shake often to break up the down.
7. Turn coat sleeves inside out to speed drying.

Filling in polyester fiber-filled items tends to shift during machine washing and tumble drying. Items may be lumpy afterward. But you can punch and shake them to fluff them up.

Wool blankets are drycleanable, but can be machine washed. *Do not use liquid chlorine bleach.* Instead, use an all-fabric bleach. Use the gentle cycle; hang to dry. The agitation of tumble drying will cause matting and shrinkage.

Electric blankets can be machine washed, but cannot be drycleaned. If the controls got wet, have an electrician confirm that the controls are safe to use again; they may need to be discarded. The plastic casing around the electrical wires in the blanket often are solvent soluble. Line dry these blankets.

Curtains and drapes

If the drapes were several years old before they were flood damaged, their previous sun exposure may cause them to fall apart when cleaned or washed. Check the permanent care label regarding washing or drycleaning.

1. For washable curtains, follow the procedures for washable clothing, but hang to dry.
2. Drycleaning costs less if you ask for *no pressing*. Wrinkles usually disappear under the weight of the drape after hanging. Cleaning may result in 5 percent shrinkage of drapes. If so, you can cut them to window-length. If they are in good shape, allow for a double or triple hem so you can let them down again after the next cleaning.

Accent and throw rugs

Follow steps for other machine-washable items. If the rug has a non-skid latex backing that was beginning to peel off before the flood, however, it may not be worth saving. The backing will flake off in the washer. To save such a rug, wash it in a tub and line dry. If the attached backing is ruined, it should be replaced. Compare prices, however, the liner may cost more than a new rug.

Storage

Mildew won't grow on dry clothing and textiles unless the items have food stains. In damp conditions, some fibers (cotton, linen, rayon, wool) gather moisture from the air and mildew can start to grow. Be sure clothing is thoroughly dry and clean before it is put away in closets or drawers. Check occasionally, if humidity persists.

Prepared by Janis Stone, ISU extension textiles and clothing specialist.

. . . and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil

Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Stanley R. Johnson, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.