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HURRICANE IAN

POST-HURRICANE SAFETY TIPS

Hurricane Ian inflicted widespread, ongoing damage. These safety tips help you avoid dangers related to flooding, power loss, post-disaster clean-up, and temporary repairs.

Dealing with Flooding and Power Loss

Flooding

- Stay clear of flooded streets – the water may hide sinkholes and have strong currents.
- Flood water often carries hazardous chemicals, sewage, and bacteria. It is not safe to drink, bathe in, or to use to brush teeth.
- “Boil advisories” are likely. Check with local authorities to see if your water source is safe to use or if it has been contaminated.
- If there is a water advisory in place, use only bottled, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene.

Power Loss

- Stay away from downed power lines and keep children and pets away as well.
- Unplug powered appliances to avoid possible surge damage when the power is restored.
- Do not run generators, kerosene heaters, grills, or other heaters inside the house – the carbon monoxide gas generated is odorless, colorless, and deadly.
- Keep generators and connected electric cords away from water.
- If you own a generator connected directly to your home’s wiring, make sure it is not also connected to the main power grid that supplies the home. Generators connected to the power grid can return electricity to the power lines outside the house and maim or kill workers attempting to restore power.
- Restrict cell phone use to emergency calls only to save your battery.
- Be neighborly. Check on elderly, ill, or disabled neighbors.

Cleaning Up

Keep this information in mind when you begin to clean up your property.

- Take photos of the damage, both to your house and your belongings. You will need them for insurance claims. *(Please note that standard home insurance policies do not cover damage caused by floods.)*
- If possible, turn off the power to your home from a dry area. Do not turn the power on or off if you are in standing water.
- Have an electrician check your home before turning the electricity back on.
- Check to be sure there are no gas leaks in the area. Check with authorities if you have a natural gas line or propane tanks before approaching your home.
- Do not approach your home if it is not safe to do so.
- Check the roads, sidewalks and walkways. Do not wade through standing water as it can cover holes or sharp debris or contain sewage, bacteria, or chemicals.

Important note: Standard home policies do not cover damage caused by flooding. Your policy’s terms and provisions will determine coverage.

- Make sure there are no downed powerlines nearby or a strong odor of gasoline or chemicals.
- Check the outside of the house before you enter.
 - Do not enter if it is no longer squarely on the foundation, the roof is sagging or if there are major structural issues that may cause the roof, house, floor, or stairs to collapse.
 - Do not enter your home if there is standing water inside.
 - Leave immediately if you hear creaking or groaning from the house – it may mean it is about to collapse.
- Assemble safety equipment as well as your cleaning supplies.
 - Hard hat, safety goggles, and N95 protective breathing masks or other high-quality respiratory mask
 - Waterproof boots with steel toes if you will be working in an area with debris
 - Waterproof boots and gloves – flood water often carries sewage, chemicals and dangerous bacteria. Avoid allowing wet or previously soaked items to touch your skin.
 - Fire extinguishers
- Use a generator to power a wet/dry shop vac, water transfer pump, or sump pump to remove standing water if needed and available.
- Work with a partner when possible. Always have help moving heavy or bulky objects.
- Wash up thoroughly after working. Launder your work clothes separately from other laundry to avoid cross-contamination.
- Check with local authorities regarding disposal of destroyed property and building materials. Local requirement may include:
 - Separating storm debris, building materials such as drywall, and electronics from normal trash or recycling. Local authorities may have arranged for a company specializing in debris removal to collect it.
 - Placing the debris in open containers rather than in garbage bags.

Prevent Mold

When possible, take the following steps prevent mold growth.

- Open windows and doors to air out your home and vent fumes from cleaning chemicals
- Make sure to wear a protective respiratory mask – inhaling mold spores can cause serious illness.
- Remove and discard wet drywall and insulation.
- Use hot water and dish soap or laundry detergent to clean all wet items and surfaces – ceilings, walls, counters, cabinets, appliances, fixtures, furniture, etc.
- If mold has already started growing, wipe surfaces down with a mix of one cup of bleach added to a gallon of water. Make sure to wear water-proof gloves and keep your workspace ventilated.
- More information is available from the Environmental Protection Agency [here](#).

Repairs

- If it is safe to do so, make any necessary temporary repairs to help protect your home.
- Take photos of the damage and repairs.
- Keep all invoices and receipts related to the repairs. Take photos of them and email them to yourself or upload them to a file storage service in case they are misplaced or become damaged.
- Review your credit card statements. This will help you find proof of purchase if you have misplaced a receipt and help remind you of expenses you may have overlooked.

- Should you have to discard any property (including shingles or your home's structural elements) or personal property such as furniture, as part of mitigating your loss, please take pictures to document the damage prior to throwing the items away.
- Keep all invoices/estimates; you may need them for your claim. *Please note that standard homeowner policies do not cover damage caused by flooding.*

Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control – [After a Hurricane](#)
- Centers for Disease Control – [Homeowner's and Renter's Guide to Mold Cleanup After Disasters](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency – [Recover after a Hurricane](#)

