

Arkansas Residents Urged to Be Cautious When Returning to Flood-Damaged Homes and Businesses

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. – Returning to a disaster-damaged house or business can present dangers and challenges. That’s why state and federal disaster officials are urging Arkansans to use extra caution when cleaning up flood-damaged properties.

First and foremost, do not return to disaster-impacted areas until local officials have given the all-clear to do so.

Second, check with local officials if you are unsure about whether your house or business is safe to enter or occupy. If official signage is posted on the structure or a notification from officials warning that the structure has been compromised, do not disregard that message. Address the concern before re-entering or occupying.

Third, recognize that potential health and safety hazards after a disaster can include:

- Carbon monoxide poisoning from generators used to power homes or clean-up equipment.
- Electrocution from stepping into water charged by live electric wires.
- Infections resulting from cuts or scrapes that come into contact with surfaces contaminated by floodwater.
- Chemical hazards from spills or storage tank leaks.
- Respiratory and heat-related illnesses.

Document the condition of your structure with photos or video before beginning to clean up. This should include documenting damaged contents as well. If possible, make a list before discarding any items.



If you are ready to start cleaning up, here are some ideas about how to reduce your risks to the dangers:

BEWARE OF HAZARDS

- First, check for damage. Check for structural damage before re-entering your home or business. Contact professionals (utility reps, plumbers, electricians, etc.) immediately if you suspect damage to water, gas, electric or sewer lines.
- Throw away food that has come in contact with floodwater.
- Check with local authorities for any boil water orders or water advisories.

CLEAN UP

- Remove wet contents immediately to prevent mold. Wet carpeting and carpet padding, furniture, bedding and other items holding moisture can develop mold within 24 to 48 hours.
- Don't be quick to throw out heirlooms or valuables. Many can be salvaged and restored. For more information, go online to: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/113297>.
- Thoroughly dry out the building's interior. Portable dehumidifiers are useful, and rental costs may be covered under a homeowners or flood insurance policy. An air conditioner also can be used to start the drying-out process. Remember to take into consideration wet sheetrock and insulation as well. Not allowing that to dry thoroughly may result in mold growth in the future.
- Have your appliances checked for damage before re-using. This would include water heaters, furnaces, air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, etc.
- Plan before you repair. The rebuilding decisions you make now to lower your risk and insurance costs can result in benefits over the long term.
- Contact your local building inspections, planning office or county clerk's office to get more information on local building requirements before repairing your structure.

FILE YOUR FLOOD INSURANCE CLAIM

- Call the insurance agent who handles both your flood insurance and homeowner's insurance to file a claim. Have the following information with you when you place your call: your policy number and a telephone number and/or e-mail address where you can be reached.



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- List damaged or lost items and include their age and value where possible. If available, supply receipts for those lost items to your insurance adjuster. Community officials may require disposal of damaged items for health and safety reasons. If so, provide photos or samples of other damaged or lost items for your insurance adjuster.

To learn more about recommended steps that should be taken immediately after a flood, go online to: <http://www.ready.gov/floods>.

For more information on FEMA assistance in disaster recovery, go to <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4441>

If you are a homeowner or renter in one of the twelve Arkansas counties currently designated for federal disaster assistance – Arkansas, Conway, Crawford, Desha, Faulkner, Jefferson, Logan, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Sebastian, Yell – you can register with FEMA. Here's how:

- Go online to www.disasterassistance.gov.
- Call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362. Phone lines are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time, seven days a week until further notice. Multilingual operators are on duty.
- Use FEMA's disaster app on your smartphone. If you haven't downloaded the app yet, you can go to www.fema.gov/mobile-app.

FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/femaregion6 and the FEMA Blog at <http://blog.fema.gov>.

For mitigation information and regularly updated disaster information go to:

<http://www.fema.gov/armit> | <http://www.fema.gov/disaster/4441>



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The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) is the state's homeland security and preparedness agency. The agency works to identify and lessen the effects of emergencies, disasters and threats to Arkansas by developing effective prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery actions for all disasters and emergencies. For additional information, contact ADEM at (501) 683-6700 or visit the website at www.adem.arkansas.gov.

The U.S. Small Business Administration is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private nonprofit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955. TTY users may also call 800-877-8339. Applicants may also disastercustomerservice@sba.gov or visit SBA at www.SBA.gov/disaster.



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