

Don't Wait to Clean Up or Make Repairs

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Residents with home damage after Helene do not need to wait for a FEMA home inspection or insurance adjuster before beginning to clean up. Typically, after a survivor applies for disaster assistance, they will be contacted by a FEMA inspector within a few days to schedule an appointment. Before starting any structural work, be sure to get a building permit from your local building authorities.

Before Cleaning Up

- Take photos of damage before you begin the clean-up process. Be sure to include photos or videos of the outside and inside of the building, including damaged personal property, and label them by room before you remove anything.
- Photograph the make, model, and serial number for appliances such as washers, dryers, hot water heaters, kitchen appliances, TVs and computers.
- Save all repair receipts.
- If you have insurance, separate damaged items from undamaged items. The insurance adjuster may need to document damaged items when conducting an inspection.
- If possible, keep samples of carpet, flooring, wallpaper and drapes.
- After taking photos, immediately throw away flood-damaged items that pose a health risk after coming into contact with floodwaters, such as perishable food, clothing, cushions and pillows.

When Salvaging and Cleaning Up Flood Damaged Property

- Always wear protective clothing. This includes long-sleeved shirts, long pants, rubber or plastic gloves and waterproof boots or shoes.
- If the home needs a tarp to prevent further damage, install the tarp as quickly as possible.
- Take wet items outside. Your home could be contaminated with mold, which may raise the health risk for those with asthma, allergies and breathing conditions. For detailed tips on cleaning mold safely, visit the Centers for



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Disease Control's site at [Homeowner's and Renter's Guide to Mold Cleanup After Disasters | Mold | CDC](#).

- Clean all hard surfaces and items with bleach. If possible, wash wet fabrics in hot water.
- Use caution when entering your home. Before entering your residence, look around the outside for damaged power lines, gas lines and other structural damage. If able, open doors and windows so your house can air out before spending any length of time inside.
- Watch for sharp objects such as protruding nails and screws, aluminum, and broken glass.
- Turn off main electrical power and water systems. Don't use gas appliances until a professional can inspect them.
- Check all ceilings and floors for signs of sagging or other potentially dangerous structural damage. Remove all drywall and insulation that has been in contact with flood waters.

Throw out any items that cannot be cleaned. This includes items like mattresses, carpeting and stuffed animals that absorb water and cannot be cleaned or disinfected.

Apply With FEMA

The fastest way to apply is online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](#) or via the [FEMA app](#). You may also call 800-621-3362. If you use a relay service, such as video relay, captioned telephone or other service, give FEMA your number for that service.

