



Government of
Northwest Territories

RETURNING HOME SAFELY AFTER FLOODING

Keep yourself safe and healthy, with these simple checklists.





Flood-damaged areas pose risks to your health

Flood water can carry raw sewage and disease, cause mould, and turn food into sources of dangerous bacteria.

BEFORE RETURNING HOME

Do not return home until the community or territorial government announces the all-clear!

- Check with your community and/or local utility providers to determine whether power, gas, water and sewage services are working.
 - Remember to confirm that drinking water is safe from the tap, and that there are no boil water orders in place. If your drinking water is from a private well, have it tested if you can.
 - Check with your community about collection or disposal of flood-damaged items, as well as any changes to routine garbage collection services.
 - Seek guidance from your community about pumping floodwaters from your house, including where you should pump the floodwater, and any other pumping restrictions.
- Gas-powered pumps should NOT be used indoors, as they can emit potentially deadly carbon monoxide.**
- Water must be removed from your flooded home slowly. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.**

Documentation is key: Take photos of all damage prior to cleaning and after. Document the time you spend working on all recovery activities, this information will be important for insurance or disaster assistance claims.

Clothing (including footwear) worn for flood clean-up activities should not be worn outside of the flood clean-up location.

If you are not staying in your home and must travel outside of home following clean-up activities, be sure to bring a second set of clean clothing (including footwear) to change into after you're done cleaning each day, and before travelling to another location



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PRIORITY ONE: BASEMENT

- Pump it out: Pump out any standing water, following the guidance provided by your local authority.

Water must be removed from your flooded home slowly. You will need to drain it in stages, removing only about one third of the volume daily. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.

Gas-powered pumps should NOT be used indoors, as they can emit potentially deadly carbon monoxide.

Get it out: Remove and dispose of wet floor coverings, furniture and other soft materials as soon as possible.

- Remove and dispose of material that has been soaked or that have absorbed water.

- **Clean it up:** Thoroughly clean interior wall cavities, using soap and water. Do NOT just clean up the affected wall surfaces.

- **Sanitize:** Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, including ceilings, using a mild bleach solution (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).

Do not use any flood-damaged furnaces or water heaters until they have been serviced and certified safe for use by a trained repair person.

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PRIORITY TWO: KITCHEN

- **Get it out:** Throw out all foods that may have been in contact with floodwater.
 - Throw out all refrigerated or frozen foods that may have spent any time in refrigerators or freezers without power. *If in doubt, throw it out.*
 - Remove and dispose of materials and surfaces that have been soaked or that have absorbed water.
- **Clean it up:** Thoroughly clean all cupboards, and surfaces, using soap and water. *Do NOT only clean up the affected surfaces, clean them all!*
- **Sanitize:** Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, including ceilings, using a mild bleach solution (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).

Documentation is key: Take photos of all damage prior to cleaning and after. Document the time you spend working on all recovery activities, this information will be important for insurance or any disaster assistance claims.



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PRIORITY THREE: REST OF HOUSE

- Ensure your house is safe to enter before beginning work: is it structurally compromised, are there hazardous spills, has the power system been inspected?
- Open all windows to allow air flow.
- Work from the bottom of the house up.

Water must be removed from your flooded home slowly – in stages of only about one third of the volume daily. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too fast, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.

- **Get it out:** Remove and dispose of walls, flooring, furniture and other household items that have been soaked.

Do NOT save mattresses and box springs that are wet. They are difficult to clean, disinfect and dry before mould sets in.

- **Clean it up:** Prevent dangerous bacteria: thoroughly clean all surfaces of the house, and interior wall cavities where they were removed.
- Wash linens, bedding and clothing in hot water, ensuring contaminated items are washed *separately* from non-contaminated items.
- **Sanitize:** Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, including ceilings, using a mild bleach solution (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).

Bathe or shower using soap and warm water when you finish any cleaning activities. Also be sure to wash your hands and any exposed skin regularly, using soap and warm water, during cleaning activities. Avoid touching any exposed skin with contaminated gloves or items.

Clothing and apparel (including footwear) worn for flood clean-up activities should not be worn outside of the flood clean-up location.

If you are not staying in your home, and must travel outside of home following clean-up activities, bring a second set of clean clothes (including footwear) to change into after you are done cleaning each day, and before travelling to another location.



Taking care of yourself and others during and after disasters

On top of risks your physical health, traumatic events like emergencies and natural disasters can have a big impact on your mental health. Coping with the stress and emotions during the disaster, and in the days and weeks that follow, can be challenging.

You aren't alone. We are here to help you take care of your mental health, as well as your physical health.

SEEK HELP

If you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, there are supports and resources available to help, including:

- **NWT Helpline:** 1-800-661-0844

If you are having thoughts of self-harm, please seek medical attention immediately, including calling 911.

DO SMALL THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:

- eat nutritious food
- stay hydrated
- try to rest often and listen to your body's need for sleep
- pace yourself on your clean-up activities, and take regular breaks
- prioritize tasks, and don't pressure yourself to tackle it all at once

LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF, AND OTHERS, NOW AND OVER THE LONG-TERM

The signs of stress related to a traumatic event do not always appear immediately during or after the event. Signs of trauma, and difficulty coping, may show up now, or in the weeks ahead.

Watch for these signs, and remember to seek help for yourself and your loved ones:

- feeling worried or frustrated more than usual
- feeling hopeless
- thinking about the disaster or traumatic event all the time
- having flashbacks to the event
- experiencing changes in your sleep pattern
- experiencing changes in appetite (eating more or less than usual)
- avoiding people or activities that you usually enjoy
- using alcohol or drugs more