

For More Information:

Technical advice and information:
**Oregon Public Health Division
 Environmental Toxicology Section**
 Ph. 971-673-0440
 Fax. 971-673-0457
<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/ophs/index.shtml>

You can visit the following Web sites for more information about flood recovery and public health:

Oregon Department of Human Services - State Public Health Division:
www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/ophs

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality - Disaster Cleanup:
www.oregon.gov/DEQ/stormdebrismgt.shtml

U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention - After a Flood:
www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/after.asp

Introduction

Flooding of homes and other buildings frequently results in wetting and damage to clothing and other fabric items. Depending on the articles involved some may be easily salvaged while others probably are not worth the work or expense to clean and disinfect them.

Health risks

- Since flood waters may carry many kinds of chemical and microbial contaminants that can cause infection, injury or disease, it is important that these items be discarded or cleaned and dried as quickly as possible after the waters abate.
- Prompt drying of all items is crucial because wet or damp fabrics will mold or mildew very quickly. Molds and mildews are extremely damaging to materials. They can pose serious staining and odor problems, and in some cases can cause respiratory irritation or allergic responses.
- Articles that require “dry cleaning” may or may not be salvageable. Call or take them to your local cleaner for specific advice about cleaning these articles.
- Stuffed furniture, carpets, carpet pads, pillows, rugs that are too large to launder or dry-clean, draperies and other large, thick or dense materials probably cannot be salvaged because they cannot be cleaned adequately nor dried quickly enough. Unless these articles are very valuable and you can arrange quickly for commercial cleaning and drying, they should be discarded.

Laundering

- Clothing and other lightweight fabric materials that can be home laundered or washed manually, may be adequately washed and sanitized by conventional laundering processes. (It is safe to use your household water for laundering even though there may be a “boil advisory” or other concerns about the safety of water for drinking or for food preparation purposes.)

Local Health Departments

Baker	541-523-8211
Benton.....	541-766-6835
Clackamas	503-655-8430
Clatsop	503-325-8500
Columbia	503-397-4651
Coos.....	541-756-2020
.....	ext. 510
Crook.....	541-447-5165
Curry.....	541-247-3300
Deschutes.....	541-322-7400
Douglas.....	800-234-0985
Gilliam.....	541-384-2061
Grant	541-575-0429
Harney	541-573-2271
Hood River	541-386-1115
Jackson.....	541-774-8209
Jefferson	541-475-4456
Josephine	541-474-5325
Klamath.....	541-882-8846
Lake	541-947-6045
Lane.....	541-682-4041
Lincoln.....	541-265-4112
Linn.....	541-967-3888
Malheur.....	541-889-7279
Marion	503-584-4870
Morrow.....	541-676-5421
Multnomah.....	503-988-3674
Polk	503-623-8175
Sherman	541-506-2600
Tillamook.....	503-842-3900
Umatilla.....	541-278-5432
Union	541-962-8801
Wallowa.....	541-426-4848
Wasco.....	541-506-2600
Washington	503-846-3594
Wheeler.....	541-763-2725
Yamhill.....	503-434-7525

If you have a disability and need this document in an alternate format, call (971) 673-1222 (971) 673-0372 TTY

- You should use conventional laundry soaps, following instructions and precautions on the labels.
- Take care in removing soil to prevent “setting” stains. Cold-water rinsing or washing may be necessary before you use hot water or before you use heat for drying.
- Warm or hot water washing is more effective in sanitizing than is cold washing. Hot or warm drying is also helpful in killing bacteria as are fresh air and sunshine.
- For items that are to be ironed, the ironing process itself is adequate for sanitizing.
- Be sure that substantially contaminated articles receive warm or hot treatment somewhere during the cleaning process.
- Conventional bleach or other laundry disinfectants are effective in killing organisms on laundered items. It is not necessary to launder differently than you normally do, so long as you keep your wash and rinse water reasonably clean.
- It may be necessary to discard all wash and rinse water after each cycle rather than using suds savers or rinse-water recycling features.

