



San Luis Obispo County

Environmental Health Services

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Tips to Prevent Post-Flooding Mold at Home: Clean It, Dry It or Discard It

Health experts urge those who find mold to act fast. Cleaning mold quickly and properly is essential for a healthy home, especially for people who suffer from allergies and asthma. Mold and mildew can start growing within 24 hours after a flood, and can lurk throughout a home, from the attic to the basement and crawl spaces. The best defense is to clean, dry or, as a last resort, discard moldy items.

Although it can be hard to get rid of a favorite chair, a child's doll or any other precious treasure to safeguard the well-being of your loved ones, a top-to-bottom home cleanup is your best defense, according to the experts.

Many materials are prone to developing mold if they are damp or wet for too long. Start a post-flood cleanup by sorting all items exposed to floodwaters:

- Wood and upholstered furniture, and other porous materials can trap mold and may need to be discarded.
- Glass, plastic and metal objects and other items made of hardened or nonporous materials can often be cleaned, disinfected and reused.
- Carpeting is a problem because drying it out does not remove mold spores. Carpets with mold and mildew should be removed.

All flood-dampened surfaces should be cleaned, disinfected and dried as soon as possible. **Follow these tips to ensure a safe and effective cleanup:**

- Open windows for ventilation and wear rubber gloves and eye protection when cleaning. Consider using a mask rated N-95 or higher if heavy concentrations of mold are present.
- Use a non-ammonia soap or detergent to clean all areas and washable items that came in contact with floodwaters.
- Mix 1-1/2 cups of household bleach in one gallon of water and thoroughly rinse and disinfect the area. Never mix bleach with ammonia as the fumes are toxic.

- Cleaned areas can take several days to dry thoroughly. The use of heat, fans and dehumidifiers can speed up the drying process.
- Check out all odors. It's possible for mold to hide in the walls or behind wall coverings. Find all mold sources and clean them properly.
- Remove and discard all materials that can't be cleaned, such as wallboard, fiberglass and cellulose areas. Then clean the wall studs where wallboard has been removed, and allow the area to dry thoroughly.

For other tips about post-flooding cleanup, visit www.fema.gov, www.epa.gov, www.redcross.org or www.cdc.gov.