

Disaster Recovery

General Guidelines

- Continue to monitor your radio or television for up-to-date emergency information.
- Be aware of new safety issues created by the disaster such as washed out roads, gas leaks, and contaminated water.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water often when working in debris.
- Be aware of exhaustion. Set priorities and pace yourself; make sure to get enough rest.
- If traffic lights are out, treat the intersection as a four-way stop.
- Avoid moving water, regardless of depth or speed. Do not drive through flooded roads.
- Learn proper safety procedures and operating instructions before operating any gas-powered or electric chain saw;
- When using any power equipment, always wear a safety face shield or eyeglasses, and gloves;
- Avoid all power lines, particularly those in water;
- Avoid wading in water; broken glass, metal fragments, and other debris may be present in the water.

Safety Precautions When Returning Home

- Use common sense and wear proper clothing, including shirts with long sleeves and long pants, and safety shoes or boots
- Find out if the authorities have declared the area safe
- Watch for debris on the road while driving
- Make sure the main electrical switch to your home is off before entering the structure
- Be careful when entering a structure that has been damaged
- If you suspect a gas leak, leave immediately and notify the gas company
- If possible, listen to the radio or contact authorities to find out if sewage lines are intact before turning on the water or using the toilet
- Continue to monitor your radio or television for up-to-date emergency information

Inspecting the Damage

- Upon returning to dwellings that may have suffered, be aware of possible structural, electrical, or gas-leak hazards.
- Electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks should be shut off to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- Use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns, rather than candles, gas lanterns, or torches.

Gas Leaks

- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately.
- Notify the gas company and the fire department, and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark.
- Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe to do so.

Electrical Damage

- Your electrical system may have been damaged. If you see frayed wiring or sparks when you restore power, or if there is an odor of something burning but no visible fire, you should immediately shut off the electrical system at the main circuit breaker.
- You should consult your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators. Be aware that it is against the law and a violation of electrical codes to connect generators to your home's electrical circuits without the approved, automatic-interrupt devices. If a generator is on line when electrical service is restored, it can become a major fire hazard. In addition, the improper connection of a generator to your home's electrical circuits may endanger line workers helping to restore power in your area.
- Any electrical outlet or device exposed to flood waters needs to have the wires dried. Replace the electrical outlet and have the system checked by a certified electrician before turning on the circuit breakers and energizing the outlet for use.

Water Damage

- Once you have established that no structural, electrical, or gas-related hazards exist in your home, dry and disinfect all materials inside the house to prevent the growth of mold and mildew.
- Walls, hard-surfaced floors, and many other household surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of one cup of bleach to five gallons of water.

- Be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that may come in contact with food, such as counter tops, pantry shelves, refrigerators, etc. Areas where small children play should also be carefully cleaned.
- Wash all linens and clothing in hot water, or dry clean them. For items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, air dry them in the sun and then spray them thoroughly with a disinfectant. Steam clean all carpeting.
- If there has been a backflow of sewage into the house, wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup. Remove and discard contaminated house hold materials that cannot be disinfected such as wall coverings, cloth, rugs, and drywall.
- All carpeting, and all dry wall damaged or wet from the storm needs to be removed to prevent molding

Downed Power Lines

- To report a downed power line call 911
- If a power line falls across your car while you are driving, continue to drive away from the line. If the engine stalls, do not turn off the ignition. Stay in your car and wait for emergency personnel. Do not allow anyone other than emergency personnel to approach your vehicle.

Animals

- Wild or stray domestic animals can pose a danger during or after a disaster. Remember, most animals are disoriented and displaced, too. Do not corner an animal. If an animal must be removed, contact your local animal control authorities.
- If you are bitten by any animal, seek immediate medical attention. If you are bitten by a snake, first try to accurately identify the type of snake so that, if poisonous: the correct anti-venom can be administered. Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck the venom out.
- Certain animals may carry rabies. Although the virus is rare, care should be taken to avoid contact with stray animals and rodents. Health departments can provide information on the types of animals that carry rabies in your area.

Fire Hazards

- Use battery powered lanterns and flashlights, if possible, instead of candles.
- If you use candles, make sure you put them in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items.
- Never leave a candle burning when you are out of the room.