Rebuilding and Repairing Your Home After Flooding

Flooding has caused widespread damage across New Mexico, affecting homes and businesses throughout our communities. In response, the New Mexico Home Builders Association is sharing this checklist to help residents clean up safely and start repairs with confidence.

Before you begin cleaning and repairing your home, make sure there is no further risk of flooding. Inspect the house from the outside to assess how safe it is to enter. Always wear protective clothing, including rubber or work gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants to protect from contaminated water, vermin, and debris.

- Assume that the electrical system may be unsafe until it has been thoroughly tested. Make sure that all electric and gas service is shut off before entering a structure for the first time.
- Unless you have received official word that the water supply is safe, purify all water for drinking, cooking, and washing. Sterilize cookware, dishes, and utensils before using them.
- Contact your insurance adjuster as soon as possible, but you do not have to wait for the adjuster to arrive before you start your cleanup efforts. Cleaning should begin as soon as it is safe to do so, but permanent repairs should not be attempted until the home is thoroughly dry. This process may take several weeks.
- To thoroughly clean walls and woodwork, use a water solution with disinfectant or bleach, and use a brush to scrub away mud and dirt. If the electrical system is operating safely, a heater, fan or air conditioner can cut drying time.
- Remove the interior surface of damaged, insulated walls to above the water height. Discard any wet insulation, and wash interior studs with disinfectant to prevent mildew. Keep the area well ventilated. Before replacing the insulation and the wall material, the open walls should be allowed to dry thoroughly. This process may take a month or more.
- Take flood-affected wood furniture outdoors to hose off. All drawers and other detachable parts should be removed for cleaning. Dry the furniture slowly to prevent warping, and be sure not to dry it in direct sunlight. Discard mattresses that have been soaked in flood waters.

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- If you decide to clean the carpets yourself, pull up all water-soaked carpets and pads. Hose them off and scrub them with a solution of detergent and water if heavily soiled. Rinsing with a mild solution of water and chlorine bleach can retard odor and mildew, but chlorine bleach should not be used on wool and certain other types of fibers. Be sure the carpet is thoroughly dry before relaying it. Rubber and waffle-weave pads can be reused.

- If water has seeped beneath the sheet flooring, the entire sheet should be removed and replaced. For tile floors, loose tiles may be re-cemented if the floor is otherwise acceptable after it dries. Check that the subfloor is thoroughly dry before applying any new floor coverings. The drying process may take weeks or months.

- Most motorized appliances can be saved. Turn off the electricity or other power source, unplug the appliance, and open it as much as possible to wipe it clean. If possible, tilt the appliance to drain any standing water. Let the appliance dry and have it checked by an appliance repair professional before you plug it in.

If you need to hire a contractor to perform repairs on any part of your home, find out if the contractor has a permanent business address and can provide references. Find out how long the contractor has been in business and whether the Better Business Bureau has any record of unresolved complaints. Make sure you get a complete, clearly written contract for the work to be done. Do not pay any cash up front unless you have signed a valid contract.

After disasters, builders build more than just homes. Builders stand together with survivors to rebuild communities. To learn more and to connect with local builders and contractors, visit the New Mexico Home Builders Association at www.nmhba.org.

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