

Repairing Floors from Water Damage to Prevent Mold Growth

Standard Operating Procedure

Revision Date: 08/16/17

Assess whether the floors can be repaired, replaced or recovered. Consider the time and budget needed when determining which action to take.

Plywood subfloors may have delaminated (separated) from excessive moisture, causing buckling. Sections may have to be replaced or have new plywood nailed over them.

Drying the Floor

Air needs to circulate around the damaged floor. Use the following tips, where applicable, to enable the air to circulate:

- Pump out excess water under crawl spaces
 - Remove plastic sheets, vapor barriers, or insulation under the floor
- NOTE:** Be sure to replace them when the floor and foundation are completely dry.
- If a basement was flooded over the first floor, remove finished basement ceilings, or cut or drill holes between all the joists to allow circulation. Don't cut or drill near electric lines or pipes.

Carpet

Carpets, rugs, and foam padding should be discarded when they are:

- Soaked by contaminated floodwater or sewage
- Repeatedly soaked by clean water (basement seepage or lawn runoff)
- Unable to be effectively cleaned or within 24 hours

Take into account the time and expense to have the carpet professionally cleaned. Is it worth the effort, expense, or health risk?

- If Yes, then the carpet or rug should be cleaned at a commercial facility or by a commercial cleaner.
NOTE: A steam cleaning (hot-water extraction) method is preferable.
- If NO, then discard and replace the carpet or rug.
NOTE: Foam padding should always be discarded because it cannot be effectively cleaned.

Removing Water from Carpets or Rugs

Tips to clean rain-soaked carpet or rugs:

NOTE: Keep in mind that most modern carpeting is made of nylon and should **not** be treated with bleach.

- Cleaning basement carpeting indoors is NOT a good idea in summer because you are adding even more moisture to an already wet area. If the carpeting is installed with tack strips you may be able to remove it, have it cleaned and reinstalled.
- If you can't remove the carpeting, dry it as quickly as possible to minimize growth of mildew and molds using a wet/dry vacuum system.
- Use a dehumidifier can help remove moisture from the air and keep the windows closed when using a dehumidifier.
- When the carpet is thoroughly dry, vacuum the area. Shampoo and repeat the drying process. Vacuum again.
- Area rugs can be cleaned by a commercial cleaner, in a washing machine, or thrown out. It depends on owner preference.

Reducing the Musty Smell

To reduce the musty smell:

- Sprinkle baking soda over the carpet, working it in with a broom or sponge mop.
- Leave the baking soda treatment on overnight.
- Vacuum the baking soda out. Vacuum twice, moving back and forth in a different direction the second time.

Information from: University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, Iowa State University Extension, American Red Cross/Federal Emergency Management Agency

Indoor/Outdoor Carpet

Indoor/outdoor carpeting and rugs need a very thorough treatment if they are to be safely salvaged. To clean indoor/outdoor carpeting:

1. Remove the indoor/outdoor carpet and rugs to a flat area such as a driveway.
2. For each side:
 - a. Hose down the carpet several times to thoroughly remove all soil.
 - b. Pour several buckets of the bleach solution and scrub with a broom.
 - c. Rinse with clear water.
3. Remove as much water as possible with a wet/dry vacuum and allow to thoroughly dry.

Vinyl Floor and Floor Tile

Vinyl flooring and floor tile may need to be removed to allow drying of subfloor.

Wooden Floors

Wooden floors should be dried gradually and naturally because sudden drying could cause the wood to crack or split. Some restoration companies can accelerate drying time by forcing air through the fluted underside of hardwood floorboards.

Badly warped hardwood floors usually can't be repaired. Warped, wide pine board flooring, however, will often flatten out after it has thoroughly dried.

If the floor is buckling or uneven after water damage, then remove the damaged sections and repair the floor.

Removing Mildew from Floors and Woodwork

Use a phosphate cleaning solution such as powdered automatic dishwashing detergent or trisodium phosphate (4 to 6 tablespoons to a gallon of water), available in hardware stores. Rinse with water and dry.

Information From: American Red Cross/Federal Emergency Management Agency - Disaster Services - Repairing Your Flooded Home- Step 4 & University of Wisconsin Extension Publications - Flood Damaged Walls, Ceilings and Floor