

**During power outages**

* Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
* The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) and the door remains closed.
* Discard refrigerated food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items if the food temperature if above 41°F for more than 4 hours.
* Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 41°F or below when checked with a food thermometer.
* Never taste a food to determine if it is safe!
* Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a long period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for 2 days.
* If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer. If the appliance thermometer reads 41°F or below, the food is safe to refreeze.
* If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.

**Steps to follow after the flood**

* Throw away any food if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.
* Thoroughly wash all metal pans, dishes and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water. Disinfect with a solution of 1 tablespoon of regular, household bleach per gallon of clean water.
* Undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans can be saved if they do not have a flip-top lid. The cans should be cleaned and disinfected with a solution of 1 tablespoon of regular, household bleach per gallon of clean water.
* Use bottled water that has not been in flood waters. If bottled water is not available, tap water can be boiled for safety.

**Flood-Damaged Walls**

* Remove water from structure as rapidly as possible.
* Remove interior surface of insulated walls to point above water height.
* Remove and discard wet insulation.
* Treat interior wall studs and plates with disinfectant to prevent growth of decay-causing organisms.
* Provide ventilation by opening windows and doors and using fans.
* Leave walls open for up to four weeks or until they have thoroughly dried.
* Select replacement materials that will withstand future floods.
* Delay permanent repairs until buildings are thoroughly dry (may be several weeks).
* Control mildew in the weeks and months that follow flood.

**Clothing and Linens**

Even if your washing machine did not get wet, do not use it until you know that the water is safe enough to drink and that your sewer line works. Before you wash clothes in the washing machine, run the machine through one full cycle. Be sure to use hot water and a disinfectant or sanitizer. Take clothes and linens outdoors and shake out dried mud or dirt before you wash them. To prevent a drain clog, hose off muddy items to remove all dirt before you put them in the washer. Check the labels on clothes and linens, and wash them in detergent and warm water if possible. Adding chlorine bleach to the wash cycle will remove most mildew and will sanitize the clothing, but bleach fades some fabrics and damages other fabrics. You can buy other sanitizers, such as pine oil cleaners, at the grocery store to sanitize fabrics that cannot be bleached. If the label says “Dry Clean Only,” shake out loose dirt and take the item to a professional cleaner. Furs and leather items are usually worth the cost of professional cleaning. If you want to clean leather yourself, wash the mud off and dry the leather slowly away from heat or sunlight.

**Cleaning Mold and Mildew**

Mold, mildew and bacteria are common following floods and other water damage. If unchecked they can lead to sanitation and health problems. The walls, floors, closets, shelves, contents-every flooded part of your house-should be thoroughly washed and disinfected. In most cases, household cleaning products will do the job

if you use them correctly. Check the label on the products to see how much to use. Some products shouldn’t be used on certain materials; the label will tell you that. Apply cleaner and give it time to work before you mop or sponge it up. Follow directions and all safety precautions on the container. After cleaning a room or item, go over it again with a disinfectant to kill the germs and smell left by the floodwaters. You may also need to get rid of mildew, an unwelcome companion to moisture that shows as fuzzy splotches.

**Cleaning tips**

Tackle one room at a time. A two bucket approach is most efficient: use one bucket for rinse water and the other for the cleaner. Rinse out your sponge, mop, or cleaning cloth in the rinse bucket. Wring it as dry as possible and keep it rolled up tight as you put it in the cleaner bucket. Let it unroll to absorb the cleaner. Using two buckets keeps most of the dirty rinse water out of your cleaning solution. Replace the rinse water frequently.

**Walls**

Start cleaning a wall at the bottom or where the worst damage was. If you did not have to remove the wallboard or plaster, you may find it the wallboard or plaster won’t come clean and you will want to replace it rather than clean it. If you have removed the wallboard or plaster, wash the studs and sills and disinfect them.

**Furniture:**

Solid wood furniture can usually be repaired and cleaned, but wood veneer often separates and warps. Wood alcohol or turpentine applied with a cotton ball may remove white mildew spots on wood. Cream wood restorers with lanolin will help restore good wooden furniture parts. Upholstered furniture soaks up contaminants from floodwaters and should be cleaned only by a professional. Unless the piece is an antique or especially valuable, upholstered furniture soaked by floodwaters should probably be thrown out.

10 feet 18 Cups

Food Safety After a Flood

**Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services**

[www.health.mo.gov](http://www.health.mo.gov)