

Work safely and protect yourself

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Boots, gloves and a mask are the minimum equipment that you need
- Ensure Proper Ventilation – A flooded home without power will get hot and stuffy quickly. Mold will begin growing in as little as two days, so open windows and use fans if available to ventilate the spaces
- Protect Yourself from Heat Exhaustion – Stay hydrated and take a lot of breaks.

Determine if the house is safe to enter

- Know if gas, power and water are on. Determine the structural integrity of the building
- Feral animals may be present – They survived the flood and were displaced just like you!
- Standing water over mud will present a variety of dangers – be careful!

Other considerations

- Lead paint may be present in houses built before 1978
- Asbestos Flooring – 8” x 8” or 9” x 9” floor tiles in houses built before 1970 often contain asbestos.
- Set up a cleaning station to clean salvaged items as they are removed.
- Set up a secure place to store and protect salvaged belongings

Debris Removal

- Start in the room furthest away from the door that you will be removing items through. This way, you don't decontaminate spaces that have already been cleaned.
- Remove items from the floor, along with furniture and appliances
- Clean out cabinets, shelves, closets and storage areas
- Cut, remove and dispose of wall-to-wall carpet and padding. Cut it into narrow strips and roll it to remove – If it is water-soaked, it will be heavy
- Remove hollow-core doors that got wet
- Remove kitchen cabinets if the water was high enough to get behind them
- Remove all baseboards, door and window trim that got wet. Note: Most baseboard, door and window trim can be reused if it wasn't under water for a prolonged period of time. Clean it and annotate on the back where it came from so that you can reuse it when rebuilding

Sheetrock Removal—Note: Any sheetrock that is or was wet needs to be removed and replaced.

- Determine where to cut the sheetrock. Cut a hole into the sheetrock at the waterline and feel inside the wall. If you feel moisture, go up a few inches and cut another hole. Continue to do this until you no longer feel moisture
- It is best to cut at either the 2 foot or 4 foot level. If the water was higher than 4 feet, you may want to replace it all the way to the ceiling.
- Once you have determined how high to cut, measure up to either 24 ½” or 48 ½” and make a mark at each end of the wall. Do this on every wall that was damaged.
- Using a chalk box, snap a level chalk line at the mark throughout the house. Don’t forget closets, utility rooms, behind toilets, etc.
- Using a utility knife, cut the sheetrock along the line, using multiple, firm passes. It will take several cuts, but it goes quite quickly. Although it is tempting to use power tools for this job, avoid the temptation. The dust, noise and further potential harm to your home (electrical wires, pipes, etc. in the walls) isn’t worth it. Change utility knife blades regularly, as the sheetrock will dull them fairly quickly.
- Once you have cut all the way through, you can pull the sheetrock from the wall quite easily. Try to keep the pieces as large as possible, as they are easier to carry and dispose of than a lot of small, broken ones.
- If there is insulation in the wall, compress and cut at the same level that you cut the sheetrock. Do NOT pull insulation from behind remaining sheetrock, as you will never be able to replace it.
- Remove all traces of sheetrock, along with nails or screws from the walls
- Flooring removal. If your home has a plywood subfloor, it may need to be removed as well, but don’t do that until you are finished with the rest of the house

Cleaning framing members. Mold can begin growing quickly and may already be visible on framing members when sheetrock is removed

- Remove mold with a scrub brush and detergent. It is NOT recommended to use bleach. Bleach is a toxin and can cause more problems if introduced into the home
- Once clean, walls can be sprayed with a mold inhibitor such as Shockwave[®] or Concrobium to keep it from returning

Dry the home out. It is imperative that the framing members be allowed to dry completely before replacing sheetrock. Walls that aren’t dry inside will fill with mold that you cannot see.