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DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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After a Flood: The First Steps

Call the Thurston County Emergency Operations Center at 360-754-3360 to report all damage.

Your home has been flooded. Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers still exist. Here are some things to remember in the days ahead.

- Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
- Keep listening to the radio for news about what to do, where to go, or places to avoid.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded
 - Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
 - Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may hide animals and broken bottles, and it's also slippery. Avoid walking or driving through it.
- Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.

Returning Home

General Tips

Returning home can be both physically and mentally challenging. Above all, use caution.

- Keep a battery-powered radio with you so you can listen for emergency updates and news reports.
- Use a battery-powered flash light to inspect a damaged home.
Note: The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering - the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.
- Stay off the streets. If you must go out, watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.

Before You Enter Your Home

Walk carefully around the outside and check for loose power lines, gas leaks, and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before entering.

Do not enter if:

- You smell gas.
- Floodwaters remain around the building.
- Your home was damaged by fire and the authorities have not declared it safe.

Going Inside Your Home

When you go inside your home, there are certain things you should and should not do. Enter the home carefully and check for damage. Be aware of loose boards and slippery floors. The following items are other things to check inside your home:

- **Natural gas.** If you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing sound, open a window and leave immediately. Turn off the main gas valve from the outside, if you can. Call the gas company from a neighbor's residence. If you shut off the gas supply at the main valve, you will need a professional to turn it back on. Do not smoke or use oil, gas lanterns, candles, or torches for lighting inside a damaged home until you are sure there is no leaking gas or other flammable materials present.
- **Sparks, broken or frayed wires.** Check the electrical system unless you are wet, standing in water, or unsure of your safety. If possible, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If the situation is unsafe, leave the building and call for help. Do not turn on the lights until you are sure they're safe to use. You may want to have an electrician inspect your wiring.
- **Roof, foundation, and chimney cracks.** If it looks like the building may collapse, leave immediately.

- **Appliances.** If appliances are wet, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. Then, unplug appliances and let them dry out. Have appliances checked by a professional before using them again. Also, have the electrical system checked by an electrician before turning the power back on.
- **Water and sewage systems.** If pipes are damaged, turn off the main water valve. Check with local authorities before using any water; the water could be contaminated. (Thurston County Environmental Health 360-754-3355 extension 6518) Pump out wells and have the water tested by authorities before drinking. Do not flush toilets until you know that sewage lines are intact.
- **Food and other supplies.** Throw out all food and other supplies that you suspect may have become contaminated or come in to contact with floodwater. Your basement. If your basement has flooded, pump it out gradually (about one third of the water per day) to avoid damage. The walls may collapse and the floor may buckle if the basement is pumped out while the surrounding ground is still waterlogged.
- **Open cabinets.** Be alert for objects that may fall.
- **Clean up household chemical spills.** Disinfect items that may have been contaminated by raw sewage, bacteria, or chemicals. Also clean salvageable items.
- **Call your insurance agent.** Take pictures of damages. Keep good records of repair and cleaning costs.

Staying Healthy

A flood can cause emotional and physical stress. You need to look after yourself and your family as you focus on cleanup and repair.

- Rest often and eat well.
- Keep a manageable schedule. Make a list and do jobs one at a time.
- Discuss your concerns with others and seek help.

Cleaning Up and Repairing Your Home

Turn off the electricity at the main breaker or fuse box, even if the power is off in your community. That way, you can decide when your home is dry enough to turn it back on.

Getting Help

- Contact your insurance agent to discuss claims.
- Listen to your radio for information on assistance that may be provided by the state or federal government or other organizations.

- If you hire cleanup or repair contractors, be sure they are qualified to do the job. Be wary of people who drive through neighborhoods offering help in cleaning up or repairing your home. Check references.

Thurston County Permit Assistance Center

We are here to help you get your flood damaged homes and out buildings repaired. At the Permit Assistance Center (PAC), we have applications, handouts, and friendly staff to answer your re-construction questions and review your re-construction plans for permit.

The Permit Assistance Center is located at the Thurston County Courthouse complex, 2000 Lakeridge Drive SW in Olympia. We are located on the 2nd floor of Building 1. We also can be reached by calling 785-5490. Our business hours are Monday – Friday 8am - 4pm. We also have permit and application information on the web at <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/>.

Removing Mold from Your Home

Dealing with Mold and Mildew in Your Flood Damaged Home

After natural disasters such as floods, excess moisture and standing water contribute to the growth of mold in homes and other buildings.

Be aware that mold may be present and may be a health risk for your family, if your home has water damage due to:

- Flooding,
- Sewage back-up,
- Plumbing or roof leaks,
- Damp basements or crawl space,
- Overflows from sinks or bathtub, or
- High humidity: steam cooking, dryer vents, humidifiers.

The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) website contains information on mold cleanup and remediation in homes, schools and other large commercial buildings.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website includes general background information about mold health hazards and mold safety recommendations.