

Getting Back to Normal

Flood recovery advice

November 2000

Cleaning up the house after the flood

- Cover open cuts and wounds on exposed skin with a waterproof plaster and wear protective, waterproof gloves.
- Remove all soft furnishings and fittings that are damaged beyond repair.
- Remove all dirty water and silt from the property, including from the space under floorboards. This may require pumping out.
- Wash down all hard surfaces with hot soapy water several times until visually clean.
- Use a domestic disinfectant, following manufacturer's directions as to concentrations, to wash over all hard surfaces after cleaning.
- Food preparation surfaces and storage cupboards, refrigerators etc should be washed down with food safe disinfectants.
- Allow thoroughly to dry—this will also help to destroy any germs left behind
- Heating and good ventilation will assist the drying process.

Clothing and bedding

- Clothing, bedding and other soft fabric including children's toys should be laundered on a hot wash (60C and above) that will destroy any germs. Other soft furnishings that may have been contaminated and cannot be put in a washing machine will have to be professionally cleaned or if this is not possible may have to be disposed of.

Other contaminants

- If flood water contained oil, diesel etc this should in the main be removed with the water and silt. Any remaining oil, diesel etc contamination in accessible area can be removed by using a detergent solution and washing surface down after initial cleaning has been carried out. In inaccessible area such as under floorboards it may present an odour problem but is not necessarily a health hazard. Further advice should be sought from Environmental Health if the odour persists or if you are particularly concerned about it for other reasons.

The flood water affecting your home or other property may have been contaminated with sewage and other contaminants.

Although any contamination would be very diluted and present a low risk there are a few precautions to take.

Please read the information in this leaflet and make use of the contact numbers given.

Included:

- Practical advice, safety information to help you get back to normal after the flood.
- Useful contact numbers can be found on page 4

RETURNING TO YOUR HOME

It is recommended that you only fully-re-occupy your home once the cleaning described earlier has been carried out.

There may be additional works to be done eventually as advised by your insurance company, housing officer, landlords, builder etc. If you decide to return home before this further work is completed you should:-

- Try to have some heating on at all times. Consider using a dehumidifier.
- If leaving doors and windows

open please consider security

- Ensure that if you have air bricks to any under floor spaces that these are unblocked to give access to cross ventilate to these areas.
- If work tops and other areas show signs of damage, avoid food contact. Particularly make sure that shelves including your refrigerator where food is stored are cleaned and disinfected.
- Try to keep any opened food in an

enclosed box or tin.

- All crockery, pots and pans should be thoroughly washed with very hot soapy water before using. If any of these are badly chipped or damaged do not use. You could also use a food safe disinfectant to sanitise them after cleaning.
- Ensure that water taps are cleaned and disinfected before using them for the first time.
- Take particular care in preparing food. Always wash your hands.

Your health matters

If you follow basic advice you should not experience any additional health problems. It is possible that the "stress" caused by the incident may well make you feel unwell in some way. This does not necessarily mean that you are suffering from any disease of infection.

Whilst in the property floorboards, walls etc will continue to dry out. Any loose material and dust resulting from this should be vacuumed

up on a regular basis.

Very young children should avoid playing directly on timber floorboards or any damaged tiled floors if possible—be aware of the risk of injury from sharp edges on tiles or raised nails in the floorboards until these have been repaired.

Help for vulnerable and elderly people returning to their houses is available from Social Services.

REMEMBER

- Do wash your hands properly if you have been in contact with flood water or silt, especially when preparing food
- Do put contaminated flood-damaged food in black plastic refuse sacks, seal and put out when your next refuse collection is due. Check with insurers before disposal.
- Do contact your doctor if you become ill after accidentally swallowing mud or contaminated water and tell him your house was flooded.
- Do replace manhole covers on your property dislodged by the flood.
- Don't be tempted to try and salvage damaged food—including tins as they may be contaminated with sewerage and chemicals left from the flood water.
- Don't switch on electrical appliances that have been in contact with flood water unless a competent electrician has checked them. Your local Electricity Board will be checking the mains supplies.
- Don't eat garden or allotment vegetables that have been covered by floodwater. Leave undamaged vegetables in the ground for at least another two weeks and then only use them thoroughly washing and cooking.

Advice from Trading Standards

DON'T PANIC

Despite the upset it will pay dividends to plan carefully what needs to be done and in what order.

TAKE PHOTOS

Still photos or video footage can be extremely useful to prove at a later date what property has been damaged.

INSURANCE COMPANY

They will be familiar with what they require of claimants and by asking them at this stage you can try to avoid pitfalls that could arise at a later date.

GET APPROVAL FROM YOUR INSURERS TO HIRE EQUIPMENT

They may want to arrange the job themselves or have a list of approved hire companies.

MAKE SURE THE SOURCE OF THE FLOODING HAS CEASED

If there is a risk of further flooding or the existing flooding is due to the raised water table then wait for this to pass.

CHOOSE A RELIABLE HIRE COMPANY

If your insurance company do not specify a particular business use one which you or others have been happy with before. Consider looking for a business that is a member of the Hire association of Europe. Get 2 or 3 quotes for prices

as they can vary markedly.

SELECT THE EQUIPMENT FOR THE JOB

1. A Submersible water pump—a 2" should pump out 27000 litres (6000 gallons per hour and will cost about £25 per day
2. A pressure washer to clean off property. Cost approximately £25 per day.
3. An Industrial Vacuum Cleaner will help to suck water from carpets. Cost approximately £25 per day (Some domestic cleaners can do this).
4. A dehumidifier—this removes water from the air and property. It is essential that you close doors and windows and provide heating to the property as this aids moisture removal. The daily charge rate varies from approximately £25 to £35 depending on the size.

GENERAL WARNING

Most traders are reputable, honest and helpful but there is a small minority who are rogues and who will try to take advantage of the recent flooding problems to make an instant and exorbitant profit.

Be wary of unsolicited calls to your

home offering to fix your problems.

Before taking someone on get a written quotation on a letter which includes a printed name, address and land-line phone number. Get alternative quotes from reputable local traders. Never give money in advance and only pay up when the job is fully completed to your satisfaction.

Have checks made on gas appliances and electrical circuits and equipment with which floodwater has been in contact. For gas appliances it is essential that consumers only contractors who are registered with CORGI, the Council for Registered Gas Installers.

If you smell gas call the TRANSCO 24 hour Freephone gas emergency service on 0800 111 999. Similarly if electrical work needs to be undertaken they would be well advised to find qualified contractors who are members of NICEIC, the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting.

IF YOU WANT FURTHER HELP CONTACT THE TRADING STANDARDS ADVICE LINE ON 01905 765373.

A word about electricity and about your water supply

Once the water goes down all internal wiring must be checked by a qualified (NICEIC registered) electrician before any power is switched back on.

If you switch the power back on without checks you are running the risk of fire, even with the damp and the worst case scenario is serious injury or even death.

- What should I do if my house/garden is flooded with sewage—contact your household insurance company first then ring Severn Trent Water
- What if my toilet isn't working? - Ring Severn Trent
- The manhole cover in the road/my garden is missing, what do I do? Ring Severn Trent Water.

Severn Trent Water can be contacted on 0800 783 4444

Flood recovery advice

Waste disposal sites in Worcester at Billford Road and Hallow will be open this weekend (11/12th November 8am—4pm) but only for people who have flood-damaged property and wish to dispose of it. The sites are **NOT** open for routine household waste disposal and flood victims should check with their insurers before disposing of items.

The South Worcestershire Silver Co-ordinators' group is a multi-partnership group formed to handle the flood situation across the area.

Representatives from Worcester Division, West Mercia Constabulary; Hereford & Worcester Fire Brigade; Hereford & Worcester Ambulance service; the Environment Agency; Worcestershire Health Authority; Worcestershire County Council; Worcester City Council; Wychavon District Council; Malvern Hills District Council and the Territorial Army made up the group.

*The information contained in this leaflet is issued on behalf of the group but reflects advice provided by partnership agencies and others. If there are any further questions, **ALWAYS** contact the appropriate authority. Contact numbers are listed below.*

Contact Numbers

Here are some contact numbers that you may find useful when getting on with the cleaning up process. Most are available Monday to Friday, where the service is 24 hours it has been marked as such.

**Worcester City
Environmental Health**
01905 723417

Worcester City Private Housing Section

01905 722276

Wychavon District Council

01386 565000

Malvern Hills District Council Environmental Health Dept

01684 892700

Worcestershire Trading Standards Advice Line

01905 765373

Transco Gas Emergency Service

0800 111 999 (24 hours)

CORGI

0121704 4101

Severn Trent Water

0800 783 4444 (24 hours)

GPU Power UK

08457 331331 (24 hours)