



Iowa Department of Public Health Division of Environmental Health

Guidelines for Salvaging Property and Personal Items

Make sure the item is in **good repair**. Items that have been torn, splintered, cracked, broken, dented, or damaged should be discarded and replaced. Deciding which items to salvage may be a more personal issue, especially if you have antiques and other pieces with sentimental value. Keep in mind that you don't need to repair all salvageable pieces immediately. You can clean, dry and store them in a warm, well-ventilated place until you have time to deal with them.

APPLIANCES

Appliances should not be operated until they have been checked by service personnel.

Here are some things that may need to be done:

- Electrical motors may need to be reconditioned or replaced.
- Wiring and fixtures need to be checked and cleaned. They may also need replacement.
- Before cleaning and sanitizing an appliance, be sure the motor is in safe, working order. It may not be worth the time to clean the unit.
- If the appliance has had contact with moisture, a rust inhibitor may need to be applied to all metal parts. Even though an appliance may not have been submerged, rust can develop from dampness in the air.

REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS

Sanitize the refrigerator or freezer if water has seeped in. Be sure the motor and freezing units are in safe, working order and the insulation is not wet. Wet insulation means replacement may be necessary.

- Remove and destroy all products/produce that have remained in a refrigerator without power for more than two hours.
- Remove and destroy all products that are no longer frozen or no longer contain ice crystals from freezers that have been without power.
- Remove and wash all shelves, crispers, and ice trays. Wash shelves, crispers, ice trays, and interior walls thoroughly with water and detergent. Disinfect with a bleach and water solution (1/4 cup bleach to one gallon of clean water).
- Leave the door open for about 15 minutes to allow free air circulation.
- Wash the outside with a mild detergent and hot water.

FURNITURE

Before starting to salvage damaged furniture, decide which pieces are worth restoring. Such decisions should be based on the extent of damage, cost of the article, sentimental value and cost of restoration. Antiques are probably worth the time, effort and expense of restoration. Unless damage is severe, you may be able to clean and refinish antiques at home.

- If furniture has been exposed to water or damp air, don't try to force open swollen wooden doors and drawers. Instead, take off the back of the piece of furniture to let the air circulate. You probably will be able to open the drawers after they dry.
- Solid wood furniture can usually be restored, unless damage is severe. The furniture probably will need to be cleaned, dried and re-glued. Wood alcohol or turpentine applied with a cotton ball may remove white mildew spots on wood.
- Wood-veneered furniture is usually not worth the cost and effort of repair, unless it is very valuable. If veneer is loose in just a few places, you may be able to glue it adequately.
- Upholstered furniture, carpeting and rugs, draperies, and other upholstered items should be surface-cleaned as much as possible. Then use a steam cleaner on the hottest setting appropriate to the items being cleaned. Be sure items are allowed to completely dry. If furniture has been impacted by raw sewage, it should be thrown away.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001501-d001600/d001560/d001560.html>

Cleaning and Disinfecting after a Disaster

Follow these simple rules for cleaning and disinfecting items after a disaster:

1. Make sure the item is in **good repair**. Items that have been torn, splintered, cracked, broken, dented, or damaged should be discarded and replaced.
2. To clean small items that are **porous** (will absorb water) such as bedding, clothing, and stuffed animals wash in the hottest water setting of an automatic washer and dry thoroughly. For larger items that are **porous** such as upholstered furniture, carpeting and rugs, and draperies surface-clean as much as possible. Then use a steam cleaner on the hottest setting appropriate to the items being cleaned. Be sure items are allowed to completely dry.
3. To clean items that are **solid** (will not absorb water) such as a concrete, tile or vinyl flooring, plastic patio furniture, plastic toys, picture frames, and appliances use a mild household detergent solution to clean the item.
4. To disinfect **solid** items, make a mild bleach and water solution (1/4 cup of bleach to one gallon of water). Use the solution in one of these ways:
 - Immerse small objects in the bleach/water solution for one minute. Remove from the solution and allow to air dry.
 - Spritz/spray the bleach/water solution on the item until thoroughly wet and allow to air dry.
 - Use a cloth dipped in the bleach/water solution to completely wipe down the item and allow to air dry.

For more information regarding environmental concerns, call 515-281-0921.