

RETURNING TO YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS AFTER A FLOOD

OVERVIEW

Use extreme caution when returning to your home or business after a flood. When an electrical installation has been in water, it cannot be turned on again without the risk of shock or fire. The following information will help you assess your flood-damaged electrical installation.

Returning Home After a Flood

When returning to a flood-damaged area, take extra precautions to protect your health and safety:

- Stay away from power lines, pad-mounted transformer boxes, and electrical wires - electric shock is a serious threat in flooded areas. Electrical current travels through flood-water which can turn a house into a conductor of electricity. Immediately report downed power lines to your utility company or call 911.
- Do not enter a flooded building until you have been advised that it is safe to do so by local authorities.
- Do not assume that any part of a flooded electrical system is safe, even if the main switch is in the off position.
- Flooded electrical installations, including equipment & appliances, electrical wiring, and electric heating systems must be thoroughly checked by a certified electrician before reusing.
- Never cross damp floors to shut off the electrical power at the main switch.
- Remember that some appliances such as televisions can “store” energy in capacitors, which can shock you even when they are unplugged.
- Even if the electricity is off in your area, you must be sure that your own power supply is disconnected. If the switch is left in the “on” position, power could be restored to the area and to your property before the wiring is properly inspected. If you are not sure that the main switch was turned off prior to flooding, do not enter the premises without first getting it checked by a certified electrician.

Restoring Electric Power To Your Home or Business

- Do not attempt to turn the power back on in your home until the wiring has been inspected by the electrical inspector or a certified electrician.
- An electrical inspector can inspect the flood-damaged installation. The inspector will list the requirements needed to make the installation safe again. An electrical contractor can also conduct an initial assessment and restore the electrical installation.
- The inspection of your electric service begins at the service entrance and proceeds through the meter base, main switch, panelboards, and branch circuit breakers. This basic equipment must be safe before reconnecting the power.



SAFETY TIPS

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- Make sure that all switches or branch circuit breakers, including those controlling large electrical appliances like ranges, washers/dryers, heating or air conditioning systems, pumps and motors, are turned off before restoring power to the electrical system.

Before a Flood

- If flood waters rise and there is a chance that water may enter your house or building, shut off your main power switch.
- If possible, move electrical appliances and other belongings to floors above ground level.

Safety Tips for Cleaning Up in Damp or Wet Locations

- Electricity and water do not mix. To reduce the safety hazards associated with operating electrical equipment in damp or wet locations, use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electric shock injuries.
- Portable GFCIs can protect you from shock hazards when operating wet / dry vacuum cleaners or other clean-up equipment.
- Never remove or bypass the ground pin on a three-pronged plug or use a non-grounded outlet.
- Remember to disinfect all flooded surfaces to kill the bacteria carried by the flood waters. If you can, wear gloves and boots to prevent direct contact with flooded areas. Don't forget to disinfect the insides of flooded appliances like your washer and dryer.

Reconditioning Flooded Electrical Equipment and Appliances

- Do not plug in or attempt to use electrical appliances that have been wet until they are serviced or checked by an electrician or service agency. Most flood damage to electrical appliances will be from wet motor windings, wet insulation, rusting of metal parts and silt or dirt in switches, contacts and other moving parts. Contact the manufacturer or dealer you purchased the appliance from for the nearest service location.
- Some electrical equipment that has been subjected to flooding may require replacement rather than reconditioning. Please see "Evaluating Water-Damaged Electrical Equipment" published by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA): <https://www.nema.org/standards/view/evaluating-water-damaged-electrical-equipment>

Contact

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