



Vermont Department of Public Safety **DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY**

1311 US Route 302, Suite 600 Barre, Vermont 05641 800-640-2106

Firesafety.vermont.gov



**PUBLIC EDUCATION &
COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION
SECTION**



HOT TOPICS
FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET

Staying Safe After a Flood



The State of Vermont Division of Fire Safety in conjunction with the State of Vermont Emergency Management and local fire officials encourages you to use the following safety tips to help protect yourself, your family and your home. These Safety tips are especially important in the days following an event when members of the community are cleaning up. You can greatly reduce your chances of getting injured by being able to identify and correct potential hazards.

**Pay attention to authorities for information and instructions.
Return home only when authorities say it is safe.**

FIRE RELATED HAZARDS PRESENT DURING AND AFTER A FLOODING EVENT:

Storms generate a variety of fire hazards. Appliances that have been exposed to water can short and become a fire hazard.

BEFORE YOU ENTER A FLOODED BASEMENT TAKE TIME TO:

- 1) Turn off the electricity, preferably at the meter.
- 2) Check outside cellar walls for possible cave-ins, evidence of structural damage or other hazards.
- 3) Turn off gas or fuel service valves; and Open doors and windows or use blowers to force fresh air into the basement.

ASSESSING DAMAGE AND GENERAL CLEAN-UP:

As you begin clean-up, focus on accomplishing the most important tasks first. Resist over-exerting yourself.

Give special attention to cleaning children's toys, cribs, playpens and play equipment with disinfectant.

Boil any items a toddler or baby might put in his or her mouth. Discard stuffed toys, water-logged toys and non- cleanable items.

Keep chemicals used for disinfecting and poisons used for insect and rodent control out of children's reach.

Wear protective clothing on legs, arms, feet and hands while working in flooded areas.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY:

If your home has sustained flood or water damage, and you can safely get to the main breaker or fuse box, turn off the power.

Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. This includes cable TV feeds.

Be aware of and avoid downed utility lines. Report downed or damaged power lines to the utility company or emergency services.

Remove standing water, wet carpets, and furnishings. Air dry your home with good ventilation before restoring power.

Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.

OIL AND GAS HEATING SYSTEMS:

In general, any flooded parts should be professionally inspected and cleaned before turning the system back on.

Check your owner's manual if you are unfamiliar with the system.

If your furnace was flooded to the level of the burners, turn off the valve on the pipe leading to it. If burners were hot when flooded, parts may have cracked.

Have the electric motor, burners, blowers, fuel pump and gears cleaned and reconditioned by an expert. Flooded fuel filters should be replaced.

Modern furnaces also have an electrical switch for blowers. Turn this off as well if any furnace parts were flooded.

If you smell gas leave your home and contact emergency services and your utility company.

SMOKE & CO ALARMS

Some smoke alarms may be dependent on our home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage.

Take an extra minute to ensure all of your homes fire safety devices are properly located and functioning. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery.

Locate Smoke and CO alarms according to the manufacturer instructions.

All smoke alarms should be tested monthly. All batteries should be replaced with new ones at least once a year.

Install CO alarms in a central location outside each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms. Each alarm should be installed on the wall, ceiling, or other location as specified by the manufacturer's instructions that accompany the unit.

Be aware of the dangers of CO poisoning, which can occur due to incomplete combustion in your wood stove, furnace, or appliances. CO detectors are available in stores.



GENERATOR SAFETY

Generators that are not properly used and maintained can be very hazardous.

If you use a generator, it is critical that proper safety precautions be taken.

Always read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions.

Operate portable generators only in dry areas outdoors, in well-ventilated areas away from all doors, windows, vents, and other building openings to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the home.

Never attach a temporary generator to a circuit breaker, fuse, or outlet. Generators should be wired into a house by a qualified electrician using a transfer switch in order to prevent feeding electricity back into overhead power lines.

If you are using a portable generator, make sure you have battery operated carbon monoxide (CO) alarms or plug-in CO alarms with a battery backup in the home.

WATER SOURCES

After a major storm, you must assume that all water sources are contaminated until proven safe.

Purify all water used for drinking, cooking and for washing eating and cooking utensils. Also purify the water used for washing hands, body and kitchen and bathroom surfaces.

Do not use water that has a dark color, an odor, or contains floating material.

WATER

Thoroughly mix water purification solutions and let the water stand for at least 30 minutes before using. To lessen the flat taste of boiled water, pour the water back and forth several times between two clean containers.

Always use clean or purified water to wash any parts of the body that have come in contact with surfaces contaminated by flood waters. Water in water pipes and toilet flush tanks (not bowls) is safe to drink if the valve on the main water line was closed before the flood.

AFTER THE FLOOD - RETURNING HOME

Avoid driving through flooded areas and standing water. As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

Do not drink flood water, or use it to wash dishes, brush teeth, or wash/prepare food. Drink clean, safe water.

If you evacuated: return to your home only after local authorities have said it is safe to do so

Listen to water advisory from local authorities to find out if your water is safe for drinking and bathing.

During a water advisory, use only bottled, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking, etc.

When in doubt, throw it out! Throw away any food and bottled water that comes/may have come into contact with flood water.

