

Safely Muck Out a Flooded Basement

We are glad you are volunteering to help restore people's residences. However, many disaster-related accidents come after the acute phase when people improperly clean and re-enter. Floodwaters contain not just mud and silt, but chemicals, carcinogenic compounds, industrial waste, and sewage. You must approach muck-out as a hazardous site.

1. **Wear Proper PPE**

It is vital to wear long sleeves and **long, tear-resistant pants** with high ankle puncture-proof boots. Every person must have an N95 or equivalent mask and heavy-duty gloves. Safety goggles or face shields are recommended. Please make sure your tetanus shot is up to date.

2. **Perform a Site Safety Survey**

Before entering the home, scout the property for safety concerns. First, look up. Floods can leave debris on the tops of houses and in trees. Next, ensure the utilities are off. Assume downed wires are live and stay away from them. If gas is smelled, leave the area immediately. Finally, check for structural damage. Look for bent walls, holes, drooping roofs, crooked columns, or damaged foundations. If any of these are present, call a professional safety inspector and don't enter until it has been declared safe.

3. **Take Debris to the Curb for Removal**

Start by opening all the windows to ventilate the building. Most communities provide debris removal services after a disaster. Barre City has several dump trailers. Put the debris piles on the curb and take care not to block access.

You must separate the following flood debris, which cannot go into landfills, from trash:

- Electronics
- Appliances
- Batteries
- Tires
- Oil
- Mercury, acidic, or other toxic products

4. **Muck-Out**

Preferably, use a flat shovel and the provided buckets. Take a break every hour for water. Wash your hands thoroughly before touching your face or food. If you sustain an injury, immediately clean and cover the wound. If an object is embedded in the wound or becomes infected, seek medical attention.

5. **Conduct Mold Remediation**

Mold, often called “black mold” though it comes in many colors, can be found inside homes. If mold is found inside, anyone with immune system disorders or lung conditions should not go inside until it has been cleaned. Mold-contaminated areas of fewer than 10 square feet can be cleaned with a bleach solution which can be supplied at the center. Gently spray over the entire surface area where mold is present. The bleach solution needs to penetrate below the surface, so soak it well and leave it to sit for a minimum of 4 hours. If the mold is in subsurface areas or is larger than 10 square feet, the homeowner will likely need to call professional contractors.

Thank you for this necessary help. Above all, please use caution and safety when helping our neighbors!

