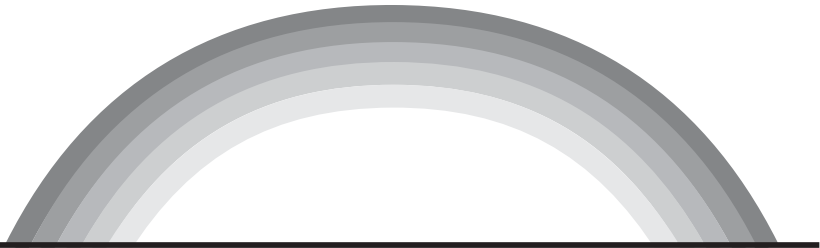


# Disaster Recovery



## Making choices about cleaning wet carpet

Floodwater contains sewage and unknown chemicals that will contaminate carpet and present a health risk. If carpeting was flooded with basement seepage, with lawn runoff, or by sump pump failure, the risk may be less. In these cases, if your carpet was in good condition, you can try to clean it.

### Decide what to do

Even with your best efforts, wet carpet is difficult to clean. It will be a challenge to prevent mildew and odor. There is no guarantee that you'll be pleased with the results, because carpet often shrinks and fades. Try these cleaning suggestions at your own risk. Wear rubber gloves when handling flood-contaminated carpet. Watch that you don't scratch or puncture yourself with carpet tacks or staples.

### Get wet carpet off the floor

Remove the carpet quickly to help preserve a wood floor. If the carpet is too damaged to save, use a carpet knife to cut it into strips that are easy to carry out for disposal. Then your floor can dry.

1. Roll up the carpet and take it outside to a driveway or patio, if it's not glued down.
2. If carpet is too heavy to move, lift it off the floor and prop it on sawhorses or other supports to drain. Afterward, it may be light enough to move. But don't let carpet dry this way if you want to save it, or it will be stretched out of shape and won't be flat when dry.
3. Remove the spongy pad underneath. It must be removed so the floor can dry.
4. For carpets glued to a concrete floor, use a wet-and-dry vacuum to extract water. Pulling them up will destroy the foam carpet backing (see "clean-it-yourself in place").

5. Clean the floors before dealing with the carpet to minimize odor and mildew.

### Seek professional cleaning advice

Professional carpet cleaners can help you decide if your carpet is worth saving. They charge by the square foot or the hour. Get an estimate before ordering the service. They may pick up your carpet at your home or you may have to deliver it to them.

A steam cleaning (hot water extraction) method is preferred. Professional cleaners apply chemicals to help sanitize the carpet. They will return it to you dry, but your home must be ready for it.

### Clean-it-yourself outside the house

You can rent a steam cleaning machine and buy the appropriate shampoo to use. Follow the directions that come with the machine. If a machine is not available, you can try the following steps.

1. Take the carpet outside and unroll it flat on a dry concrete area, such as a driveway or patio, preferably in full sun.
2. Use a garden hose with a strong spray nozzle. Start at one end and "sweep" the carpet with water. Do this once. Turn it over and hose the back side. Then "sweep" the face with water again.
3. Pour on an all-purpose, liquid cleaner and let it soak a few minutes. (Do not use full-strength ammonia. Do not use ammonia cleaners on wool.) Check ingredient labels on brand-name products.
4. "Sweep" the carpet again, forcing the cleaning foam and dirt ahead of you.

5. Rinse thoroughly until all of the cleaning foam has been removed. You **MUST** rinse before any bleaching to avoid producing toxic fumes that result when bleach and ammonia are mixed.

6. After the cleaner is rinsed out completely, use a wet-and-dry vacuum to get water out of the carpet.

7. Dry the carpet as quickly as possible to help avoid mildew.

### **Clean-it-yourself in place**

Try this method with glued-down carpet **ONLY** if your room has slightly sloped concrete floors and a working drain, as some basements do.

1. Use a wet-and-dry vacuum to suck up as much water and mud as possible if you have electricity. Do not let electrical cords get wet.

2. If no power equipment is available, use a garden hose with a strong spray nozzle to flush out mud and water as described for “clean-it-yourself outside the house.”

3. Start at the end farthest from the drain. “Sweep” the water, detergent, and mud in the direction of the drain. Use a wet-and-dry vacuum to suck up water after hosing.

4. If cleaning is not successful or if the carpet gets mildewed because it doesn’t dry quickly enough, tear it out. If the foam backing gets torn in the process, it may be possible to tear off all the backing to salvage the carpet face, following the steps for “clean-it-yourself outside the house.”

### **Bleaching**

Bleaching may further reduce staining of your carpet, but it will not ensure that it is microbe-free or totally sanitary. Bleach probably will change the carpet’s color.

1. Mix a solution of 1/2 cup liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water (2-1/2 cups per 5 gallon bucket). You may need more or less than 5 gallons depending on the size of your carpet. Remember, full-strength bleach will dissolve wool fibers and may irritate your skin. (Do not use bleach on wool carpet; instead, use pine-oil cleaners.)

2. While the carpet is still wet, use a small sauce pan or measuring pitcher to dribble the bleach solution over one section of the carpet. Wear rubber gloves to rub it into the carpet with a plastic scrub brush. Let it set for about five minutes, then rinse thoroughly with the hose. Repeat until the total carpet has been treated and rinsed.

### **Dry the carpet**

1. Use a wet-and-dry vacuum to pull water out of the carpet.

2. Place the carpet in full sun. Turn it over occasionally to speed drying. If you have to leave the carpet outside in the rain, it won’t be further damaged as long as it is left flat.

3. If you must dry the carpet inside, run the central air conditioner and dehumidifiers to help remove moisture. Fans also will help to circulate the air, but they won’t remove moisture. Try to dry the carpet quickly because slow drying will lead to a sour smell and mildew growth.

### **Prevent mildew**

1. Be sure the carpet is thoroughly dry before returning it to the house, if possible; in any case, do not leave it rolled up damp.

2. Clean and dry floors thoroughly before putting the carpet back into place. Scrub floors with hot water and detergent, then rinse with a bleach solution of 1/2 cup per gallon of water.

3. If you have a basement, dry it out as much as possible. Run an air conditioner and a dehumidifier to help remove moisture from the house.

4. Close windows on the house if outside air has high humidity. If outside air is drier, open all doors and windows.

5. Run fans to circulate air in tight places, such as closets. A light bulb left on in the closet will help drying because of the heat it produces.

### **Protect yourself**

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after you’ve handled carpet or other flood-contaminated materials. Seek medical attention if floodwater comes in contact with open wounds or scratches.

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