

Tips for flood clean up

In flood damaged areas, water and mud have devastated homes, schools and businesses. Many buildings and their contents have been wet for days, creating serious potential health hazards. Mold or bacterial contamination can result in mild to severe health symptoms if people do cleanup work without proper protection or reoccupy buildings before they are dry and properly cleaned.

To help our members, NYSUT is offering these tips to avoid health problems for anyone reoccupying these buildings.

- If there is still standing water or dampness inside the building (beyond normal humidity levels), it should not be occupied.
- Any materials such as those in the building structure or contents and furnishings that cannot be dried out within 24-48 hours must be discarded and replaced to avoid exposure to unhealthy levels of mold and bacteria.
- Anyone who may do mold clean-up work needs to wear appropriate personal protective equipment and follow work practices and procedures that assure a safe and effective mold clean-up.
- People with asthma, mold allergies or other respiratory conditions, people with weakened immune systems, children and pregnant women SHOULD NOT do this work and MUST remain out of these buildings until the work is finished.

There are many good resources to help you assess whether cleanup efforts are effective and protect people's health. Many of these resources also tell you how to protect yourself if you are doing cleanup.

Homes/housing:

A guide originally developed after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to help homeowners and contractors to clean up homes safely is available at: [Creating a Healthy Home- A Field Guide for Clean- Up of Flooded Homes](#).

Greene County Cornell Cooperative Extension's web page with multiple factsheets including what to do about handling water damaged electrical equipment, damaged crops and gardens and restoring water wells is at <http://www.agroforestrycenter.org>.

The Centers for Disease Control web site about potential problems of flood water contamination: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp>.

Schools and Other Workplaces:

There are many choices for information on floods, water damage and mold cleanup. We think that the information on EPA's web site is comprehensive and highly recommended. There is info on health and mold, large buildings and mold, etc. For a complete guide on mold remediation in schools and commercial buildings, click on "Publications" on this mold resources page:

<http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html>.