

Frequently Asked Questions About Cleaning Flooded Basements

Strong storms and heavy rainfalls can cause flooding throughout Iowa. Here are some common questions about basement clean-up after a flooding.

What should I do before going into flooded basement?

1. Turn off the electricity, preferably at the meter. If you cannot safely turn it off, call your utility company to have it disconnected.
2. Turn off all gas valves.
3. Check outside cellar walls for possible cave-ins, structural damage, or other hazards.
4. Open doors and windows or use blowers or fans to force fresh air into the basement. Gas may be trapped inside your home.
5. Wear rubber gloves when handling items that have been in floodwater.

What should I know before pumping water out of my basement?

- Do not use an electric pump powered by your own electrical system. Instead, use a gas-powered pump, or one connected to an outside line. Never place a gas-powered unit inside. Always place it outside in a well-ventilated area to avoid carbon monoxide.
- More damage may be done by pumping water from the basement too soon or too quickly, than from letting the floodwater remain. Water in the basement helps brace the walls against the extra pressure of water-logged soil outside. If water is pumped out too soon, walls can cave in from the outside water pressure.
- To help prevent structural damage, pump water out of your basement in stages. Remove about a third of the water each day to prevent structural damage or collapsing of basement walls due to unequal pressure.

What about the clean-up process?

- Shovel out any mud and debris while it is still moist.
- Hose down walls and remove as much silt as possible before it dries.
- Floors and walls may to be sanitized, especially if sewage is in the basement.
- Scrub walls and floors with a mild bleach and water solution prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions. Allow the area to dry completely.

In homes without basements the area below the floor may be completely filled with mud. Remove the mud as soon as possible to avoid rotting floor joists or the foundation.

Resources

CDC: [Guidelines for Cleaning Safely After a Disaster – Floodwater and Mold](#)

EPA: [Flooded Homes Cleanup Guidance](#)