



# Vermont Department of Public Safety DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY

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Updated Jan 2018

[www.firesafety.vermont.gov](http://www.firesafety.vermont.gov)

## FLOOD SAFETY



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

### 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
- 4) 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 cleaning up debris.

### CHEMICAL SAFETY:

Look for combustible liquids like gasoline, lighter fluid, and paint thinner that may have spilled.

Thoroughly clean the spill and place containers in a well-ventilated area.

Keep combustible liquids away from heat sources.

### 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.

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HOT TOPICS  
DFS  
Fire Safety Sheet

This sheet is designed to provide fire safety information to enhance the safety of all Vermonters. This information sheet is an overview and is not an all-inclusive list of state laws or additional code requirements that may apply, questions should be directed to the division's regional offices. This educational resource sheet does not carry the force of legal opinion and was developed by the Vermont Division of Fire Safety- Public Education and Information Section with information provided by The U.S. Fire Administration, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and other public safety partners. For additional information and public education resources please visit [firesafety.vermont.gov](http://firesafety.vermont.gov)

**SMOKE & CO ALARMS**

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

Take an extra minute to ensure all of your home's 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

**KEEP SAFETY IN MIND AND REMEMBER...**

Be careful when using candles, temporary heating devices and generators. Keep away from anything that can burn and out of the reach of children.

**GENERATOR SAFETY**

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.

**TO DISINFECT WATER**

To disinfect water, use ONE of the following methods:

1. Boil at a rolling boil for 10 minutes.
2. Add eight drops of liquid chlorine bleach (such as Clorox) per gallon of water. Make sure the bleach has no active ingredient other than 4 percent to 6 percent sodium hypochlorite.
3. Add 20 drops of 2 percent iodine per gallon of clear water or 40 drops per gallon of cloudy water.
4. Add water purification tablets according to directions on the package. These tablets can be bought at most drug and sporting goods stores.

Thoroughly mix these 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.