

Protecting A Home From Storms And Flooding Begins On The Inside

To protect a home from damage from a flood or a hurricane takes more than just making the outside stronger. The inside of the house can be better protected from wind and water with a little planning and preparation.

Several things can be done to minimize damage inside a structure. Here are some ideas:

Floors:

- Consider using one or more area rugs or carpet remnants rather than wall-to-wall carpet; smaller pieces can be rolled up and stored on an upper floor in a heavy rain event.
- Completely dry subflooring before laying new flooring.
- Do not use laminate flooring on top of concrete – especially in a basement – where the floor could retain moisture or get wet.

Drains:

- Install a sewer backflow valve to prevent sewage from backing up into the house.
- Install a sump pump or pumps in the basement floor to help keep groundwater from entering a structure. Sump pumps are used to remove water from basements and other low areas. Consider choosing a model with a battery backup so that it continues to work if the power goes out.

Electrical System:

- Raise wiring and electrical components – panel boxes, switches, outlets – at least 1 foot above the Base Flood Elevation. Homeowners who are not in a designated floodplain, should consider raising these components an extra 1 foot above the level required by building codes.
- Use wire rated for underground use if it has to run into areas that could get wet.
- Ensure that all junctions are in approved junction boxes.
- Change all outlets to Ground Fault Interrupters (GFI).
- Raise electric baseboard heaters above the Base Flood Elevation.
- Hire a licensed electrician for all wiring work and be sure the work is properly permitted and approved by the local building department.
- For questions about a home or building's Base Flood Elevation contact the local building or floodplain management department.

Appliances:

- Elevate appliances – water heaters, furnaces, washers and dryers.
- When possible, move them from a basement or lower level to an upper floor. Otherwise, relocate appliances on a masonry or pressure-treated lumber base that's at least 1 foot above the Base Flood Elevation (or at least 6 inches tall if there is no Base Flood Elevation).

- Make sure washers/dryers will not vibrate off the platform during use.
- Hire a licensed contractor when plumbing or electrical changes are needed.

Interior Walls:

- Wash and disinfect the studs and sills if the drywall and insulation have been removed. Give the studs and sills plenty of time to dry before hanging new drywall.
- Use a moisture meter to be doubly sure.
- Cut drywall so that it is one-half to 1 inch off the floor, especially in basements.
- Concrete floors commonly absorb ground moisture – especially in winter months.
 - That moisture can wick up the wallboard if it's touching the floor, allowing mold to grow out-of-sight within the walls. (Hide the gap with wood or rubberized floor trim).
 - If greenboard or other moisture-resistant drywall got wet, replace it. These materials can present the same health hazards as regular drywall when soaked with floodwaters.