

Returning to flood-affected buildings

In most cases, people will want to return to their homes and business premises as soon as possible after the flood water has receded. While this should be encouraged, they should only return once basic needs are available and the site is cleared of any hazards and declared safe by the relevant government agency.

Services such as gas and electricity may have been damaged during the flood and may be hazardous to residents if attempted to be used before being checked by the authority. Wild animals, snakes and spiders may have been trapped in the building as the flood waters entered and be a hazard to unsuspecting residents. Pets and other animals may have died in the building and need to be removed.

Action to take

To assist in making a building habitable:

- Ensure gas, electricity, water and sewerage have been checked by the relevant authorities before use.
- Ensure all individuals take adequate precautions and wear suitable protective clothing when cleaning up.
- Drain, clean and dry out the building as soon as possible.
- Remove all wet and damp fittings (i.e. carpets, furniture).
- Check for trapped water and mud cavities.
- Check flooring for swelling.
- Increase airflow under the building.
- Remove hollow doors.
- Ignore mould growth until the area is completely dry and then remove with bleach. Disinfect where necessary.
- Check rainwater tanks, particularly inground tanks. If they have been inundated with flood waters, the water may have been contaminated and should be discarded. The water tank should be appropriately disinfected using enough chlorine to give an initial chlorine dose of 5mg/L. The amounts required will depend on the amount of available chlorine you use. Read the labels. However, as a general rule:
 - household bleach (4% concentration) - 125 ml or 125g / 1000 litres
 - liquid swimming pool chlorine (12.5%) - 40 ml or 40g / 1000 litres
 - granular swimming pool chlorine (70%) - 7ml or 7g / 1000 litres

After adding, allow to stand for at least one hour. You will need to calculate the amount of water in your tank to determine the appropriate amount of chlorine to put in.

- Seek advice from your local council's environmental health officer before eating food which may have been affected by the floodwater.

- Take all necessary precautions for handling asbestos cement debris. Contact your local council or emergency workers for information on any special requirements or arrangements relating to waste collection and disposal in your local area.

If you believe a homeowner, occupant or owner-builder is unsafely handling, removing or transporting asbestos material or a person has illegally dumped asbestos waste, please contact your local council. If you believe a business or contractor is unsafely handling, removing or transporting asbestos materials, phone the Queensland Department of Justice and the Attorney-General (Workplace Health and Safety Queensland) on 1300 369 915.

For more information

This fact sheet can be accessed online at

- Queensland Health fact sheet *Rainwater tanks – a guide to keeping your tank safe*
www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/ehu/32922.pdf
- Queensland Health fact sheet *Is it safe? Cracked, damaged or weathered asbestos cement sheeting*
www.health.qld.gov.au/asbestos/documents/damaged_sheeting_fs.pdf
- Asbestos in the Home website
www.health.qld.gov.au/asbestos
- Department of Infrastructure and Planning local government contact details
www.dip.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory/index.php
- Refer to *Prepare for cyclone, storm, flood and tsunami now!* at the Emergency Management Queensland website
www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp
- Refer to information about repairing damage caused to their home by natural disasters such as fires, floods, storms or cyclones at the Building Services Authority website
www.bsa.qld.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx
- Emergency Management Australia community awareness publications
www.ema.gov.au/www/emaweb/emaweb.nsf/Page/Publications

For further information, contact your nearest Queensland Health public health unit:

Brisbane North	Tel: 3624 1111	Gold Coast	Tel: 5668 3700	Rockhampton	Tel: 4920 6989
Brisbane South	Tel: 3000 9148	Hervey Bay	Tel: 4120 6000	Sunshine Coast	Tel: 5409 6600
Bundaberg	Tel: 4150 2780	Logan	Tel: 3412 2989	Toowoomba	Tel: 4631 9888
Central West	Tel: 4920 6989	Mackay	Tel: 4885 6611	Townsville	Tel: 4753 9000
Cairns	Tel: 4226 5555	Moreton Bay	Tel: 3142 1800	West Moreton	Tel: 3413 1200
Charleville	Tel: 4656 8100	Mount Isa	Tel: 4744 9100		