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Restoring Heating Systems After A Flood

Assessing Damage And General Clean-Up

Have you checked out your heating system to see if it has been damaged by the flood? Any heating system exposed to flooding should be professionally inspected, cleaned and reconditioned before reuse. Floodwater may have damaged heating equipment and undermined chimneys. If chimney cracks or leaks go unrepaired, your family is at risk of fire or carbon-monoxide poisoning.

Ask the service person if there is anything you can do to help before his or her arrival. Usually this will include turning off fuel and power to flooded units as a safety measure, and removing mud and debris from the furnace housing and inside the chimney. Leave things like inspection of oil storage tanks and cleaning of motors, blowers and other flooded parts to the professional. Flood insurance and federal disaster assistance programs usually will help replace flooded gas and oil appliances, including furnaces.

For oil burning systems:

- Have the storage tank inspected by an experienced person to make sure water and dirt have not entered.
- Have the electric motor, burners, blowers, fuel pump and gears cleaned and reconditioned by an expert. Flooded fuel filters should be replaced.
- Be certain that the fan motor, electric ignition systems and wiring are completely clean and dry before you turn on the electricity.
- If you have a hot water system, clean the fins on baseboard radiators. Clean any wall radiators.

For liquid petroleum and natural gas systems:

- Some natural gas systems may have a valve to the pilot gas line, in addition to the main fuel valve. Turn both off if this is the case.
- Have a service person:
 - a) Check to see if water leaked into the controls or pressure regulator.
 - b) Clean and recondition all flooded equipment, including burner elements, electric controls and regulators.
 - c) Replace severely flooded electric blower motors.
- If you smell natural gas – which has a distinctive, putrid odor – leave your home and contact your utility company or a service person. Do not use open flames in the area.

If you need to install new heating systems or appliances consider installing Energy Star[®] rated equipment. The incremental cost of the higher efficiency system will result in lower energy bills in the long run. Income eligible families can qualify for funds through New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to replace flood damaged combustion appliances with new Energy Star[®] rated appliances. Visit NYSERDA's web site at www.getenergysmart.org for information on NYSERDA's energy loan programs.

For further information on flood cleanup contact Jeanne Darling at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County (607) 865-6531 or by e-mailing delaware@cornell.edu. *Cornell Cooperative Extension in Delaware County provides equal program and employment opportunities. Please contact the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County office if you have any special needs.*

Source: University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency