

Marks Remarks by Mark Rowen Lincoln County Educator 3-15-07

The warm temperatures have brought the advent of flooding in the low areas. If you have the unpleasant experience of being a flood victim there are some precautions to take before entering your home. Make an external visual inspection of the home and look for signs of structural damage. The building may have moved off the foundation, sills, or the walls may have twisted. If you see any type of damage like this, consult with an engineering professional before entering the home. If the building or home passes the external evaluation, then internal damage will need to be assessed. If the building is insulated, this wet insulation will have to be removed. Since flood water usually has a foul odor, the sooner the removal the better. Removing insulation may involve removing sheetrock also. This material and the insulation will usually wick the water above the highest point. After wood, laminates, or plywood has been wet, warping may ensue. Check any laminations for bonding security and nailing too. After all inspections have been made, cleanup and renovation can proceed. Cleanup will probably include removal of some silt or mud from floors. If the floors are wood they will probably warp and buckle. Do not try to repair them until fully dried. It may be possible to pull some of the flooring back into place with nails.

DO NOT Turn power on to a flooded structure until it has been inspected by a qualified electrician. All electrical equipment that has been covered with water will need to be cleaned dried and inspected by a qualified person. This will include motors for furnace fans, air conditioners, freezers, any livestock feed equipment, etc.

If a well is the water source, have it tested before using, even for livestock. If the source is a rural water system, check for breaks or leaks in supply lines. It is suggested to flush the lines before use.

Any food items surviving the flood will need to be discarded. Even if the items are in sealed containers, the risk for contamination is too great. If frozen foods have thawed completely and warmed to temperatures around 40 degrees, they need to be cooked immediately or discarded. If the frozen food still has ice crystals all the way through, it can be refrozen. Frozen food in a freezer, if unopened will keep for one-three days depending on the freezer. Dry Ice can help keep frozen food. Use 2.5-3 pounds of dry ice per cubic foot of freezer capacity with chest types; more for upright freezers.

Clean-up and recovery for flood victims creates a new set of problems. Evaluate the extent of damage and focus on prioritizing the cleaning process.