



# Disaster readiness · response · recovery

## How to Salvage Flood-Damaged Appliances

### Cleaning Appliances

Appliances submerged by floodwaters, particularly salt waters, are often not repairable. Appliances that have been wet by rainwater and not flooded are often repairable. Water, especially dirty floodwater, causes many problems. If it gets into an electric motor, the windings, electrical contacts, and switches may corrode or short out. If it gets into insulation, appliances that heat or cool (ranges, refrigerators, freezers) may not work well and odors may linger for years. Appliances damaged by water can sometimes be made functional, but they will likely have a shortened life expectancy. Depending on the age and condition of the appliance before it was damaged and considering the danger of personal injury from improper repairs, you may want to replace rather than repair the appliance.

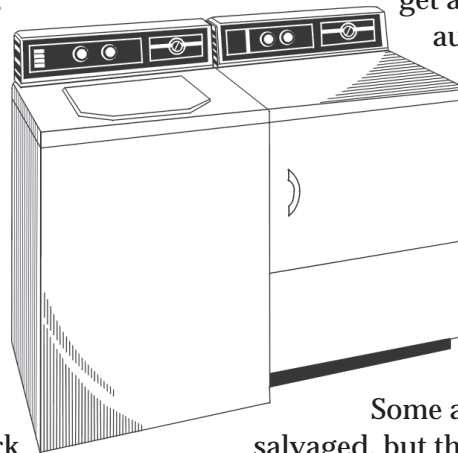
New appliances also tend to be much more efficient so a new appliance may pay for itself in savings on your electrical bill.

### First...

Before entering a home after a flood, be sure that the electricity has been completely shut off at the fuse-box. If you are not certain how this is done, get a licensed electrician or authorized service person to do this for you. If there is still water surrounding an appliance, don't go near it until you are certain that the electricity to that appliance has been shut off.

Some appliances can be salvaged, but they must be thoroughly dried out first and should be checked out by an authorized service technician before being plugged into an electrical outlet. Wait before you clean and sanitize the appliance. It may not be worth the time to clean the unit.

Move the appliance to a location where air can get to it. Prop any doors open. You may want to use a fan to increase the airflow. Make certain that a small child can't get inside and close the appliance door. The drying process may take a week or longer.



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## Don't Hose Them Down

You may be tempted to hose appliances down. Don't do it! Water may get into places that the flood didn't reach, and you will only increase the damage. Instead, use a wet cloth and a common household cleaner like Formula 409 or Fantastik. Rinse with a disinfectant solution (3/4 cup chlorine bleach for each gallon of water) to sanitize and discourage mildew. Dry with a towel.

## Getting Rid of Odors

If an odor persists, wash with a solution made by adding 1 teaspoon of baking soda to a quart of water, or 1 cup of vinegar or household ammonia per gallon of water. Activated charcoal, usually available where swimming pool or aquarium maintenance supplies are sold, will gradually soak up persistent odors. Place a thin layer in a large cookie pan and leave it there for 6 to 8

hours. Then, reactivate the charcoal by placing the pan in a 350° oven for approximately 1 hour. This procedure may be repeated indefinitely, as the charcoal never wears out.

Refrigerators and freezers with wet insulation probably can't be salvaged. While older models with fiberglass cabinet insulation and metal liners can be saved by replacing the insulation, this is a costly repair and the money might be better spent on a new, more efficient model. Cabinets with polyurethane foam insulation and seamless plastic liners resist water better, but once soaked, are not repairable.

## Built-In Appliances

Built-in ranges, ovens, and dishwashers (not portable or free-standing) generally have a batt of fiberglass insulation wrapped around the inner cabinet, with no outer cabinet. This insulation is easily removed and replaced.

## "800" Numbers for Appliance Manufacturers

Even though an appliance warranty does not cover flood damage, most appliance manufacturers have disaster programs and offer discounts on parts of a new product if an appliance is involved in a major flood.

Your extension agent has a list of "800" numbers for all major appliance manufacturers. Call the manufacturer for advice or financial help before you attempt to plug in the appliance.

If you have any questions about the safety of an appliance, contact the manufacturer or local authorized service technician.

The use of brand names in this publication does not imply endorsement of the products mentioned or criticism of similar products not mentioned.



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