

## FOH Protocol for Controlling Microbial Growth After a Flood

1. Inventory all flooded areas so that every water damaged area is treated and cleaned.
2. Remove and dispose of all wet ceiling tiles and drywall within 24 hours of water contact.
3. Remove and replace all drywall and insulation damaged by water **up to 12 inches above the water line**. Wicking can cause water to move up several inches above the water level.
4. Dry all wet light fixtures.
5. Water damaged furniture should be replaced or cleaned with a diluted 10% bleach solution. Furniture made of particle board or pressed water board should be discarded. Wood furniture can be salvaged by removing microbial growth with a bleach solution. However, check to see whether the solution will damage the furniture finish. Fabrics soaked in standing water should be treated the same as carpets (see below).
6. Leave all cabinets and drawers open to facilitate air flow for drying. All surfaces of cabinets and drawers should be wiped and disinfected with a diluted bleach solution.
7. Remove and dispose of nonessential wet files and paperwork. Remove any essential wet paper from the flooded area to a location where it can be dried, photocopied, and then discarded.
8. If a large amount of files and paperwork cannot be dried within two days, essential files and paperwork may be rinsed with clean water and temporarily frozen until proper drying of the files and paperwork can be completed. Never let paper products become moldy.
9. Immediately remove as much water as possible from wet carpeting using wet vacuums.
10. Upon completion of the wet vacuuming, shampoo the carpet with a 10% bleach solution twice within a 30-minute period. Begin shampooing as soon as the wet vacuuming is finished. Before beginning the bleach treatment, conduct a spot test in an inconspicuous area to see if the bleach fades the carpet.
11. If the carpet fades with the bleach solution, then the area must be immediately dried and treated with an alternate biocide. *Consult a microbiologist to determine what type of biocide to use, since certain biocides are inhibitors and may not be effective in killing microbes.*
12. Rinse the carpet with clear water to remove the bleach solution. Take steps to ensure that the carpet is *totally dry within 12-24 hours of treatment*.
13. Increase air circulation and ventilation if any biocide is used.
14. Air and material testing for microorganisms should be performed immediately after the flood and periodically thereafter by a trained environmental health professional to ensure that no microbial amplification and excessive human exposure occur. Post-cleanup clearance sampling and inspection are necessary to ensure that no excessive concentrations of microbes still exist in the building.
15. Use dehumidifiers and air conditioning/ventilation to speed up the drying process.
16. Determine the sources of the water intrusion. Repair all structural damage or design flaws if the problem was due to construction defects. Inspect and maintain all similar building structures to prevent repeated problems.