



Cleaning Up a Sewage Spill

This document was produced in cooperation with the Emergency Management Division of the Washington State Military Department.

Thorough cleaning of indoor sewage spills is necessary to protect people -- especially small children -- from harmful bacteria and viruses. Clean-up should begin as soon as possible to reduce the risk of exposure to sewage.

Clean up tips:

- Keep children and pets out of the area until clean-up has been completed.
- Wear rubber gloves and boots. Use eye protection.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and launder clothes separately after completing the clean-up.
- Remove all furniture, loose rugs, and so on from the area.
- Saturated wall-to-wall carpeting (and the pad) usually cannot be adequately cleaned. They should be removed, wrapped in plastic, and taken to a transfer station or sanitary landfill. If you decide to keep the carpeting, hire a licensed carpet cleaning company to steam clean and disinfect the carpet.
- All hard surfaces, such as linoleum, hardwood floors, concrete, wood moldings, wood, and metal furniture, and on should be thoroughly cleaned with hot water and a mild detergent (dish detergent), and then rinsed with a bleach solution by mixing one tablespoon of liquid household unscented bleach to one gallon of water. Let the surface air dry.
- Upholstered furniture, loose rugs, drapery, and so on should be professionally cleaned. Notify the cleaner of the problem.
- Remove and replace plaster, plasterboard, and lath that have been saturated and are soft to the touch. If the surface has been wetted, clean as you would a hard surface, but do not saturate the plaster.
- Clean sinks, dishwashers, and other plumbing fixtures that have had sewage back-up with detergent, and then rinse with the bleach solution.
- Disinfect clean-up mops, brooms, and brushes with the bleach solution.
- Prevent mold growth and reduce odors by increasing air circulation -- open all windows and doors. The use of fans and heaters may speed this process.

You can clean undamaged canned food:

1. Remove labels
2. Wash with a scrub brush in a detergent solution (use washed cans as soon as possible because they will rust)
3. Rinse in clean water
4. Sanitize by:
 - Boiling for 10 minutes, (Do not boil cans of carbonated beverages), or
 - Immersing cans in bleach solution for 15 minutes
5. Re-label with marker or grease pencil

Discard

- Sealed food items
- Home canned foods
- Food items packaged in paper or cardboard
- Unpackaged foods such as fruit, potatoes, squash

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