

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Georgia Healthy Housing
one change many impacts

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It is important to gather as a household and talk through the types of emergencies most likely to occur in your area. Consider scenarios such as severe weather, fires, floods, and hurricanes, and then discuss who is responsible for each task. Who will grab the emergency kit, the kids and/or pets, or handle communication with emergency contacts? If roles are undesignated now is the perfect time to do so.

Lastly, practice your plan regularly so there is less pressure during a real emergency. Just like fire and tornado drills we practiced in school, this is no different. Make the extra effort to keep you and your family safe and prepared.

Visit the [Red Cross website](#) to find locations near you and learn which natural disasters are most likely to affect your area. There are also safety tips for preparing your home and family for 24 types of emergency situations.

Now is the time to prepare!

Update Your Family's Emergency Plan

Written by Brittany Harrison, MS, Baldwin County

Whether it is a storm or fire, developing a clear emergency plan ensures that you and members of your household are safe and secure. The American Red Cross recommends a 3-step process to build a plan that everyone understands and can follow in an emergency: (1) talk it out, (2) assign roles and responsibilities, and (3) practice your plan.

CHECKLIST
Restocking your Emergency Kit

- 1 CHECK EXPIRATION DATES**
Move out old food, water, batteries along with medications. Replace with new items.
- 2 UPDATE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS**
Confirm copies of IDs, insurance policies in addition to medical information are current.
- 3 ADJUST FOR THE SEASON**
Put in or take out items such as blankets, sunscreen, or extra water, depending on the time of year.
- 4 CONSIDER YOUR FAMILY'S CHANGING NEEDS.**
If you add a baby, pet, or medication, update your kit.

✓ CHECK EXPIRATION DATES ✓ UPDATE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS ✓ ADJUST FOR THE SEASON ✓ CONSIDER YOUR FAMILY'S CHANGING NEEDS

Image designed by Brittany Harrison

Mold Control After a Flood

Written by Stephanie R. Benton, Early County Extension FCS Agent

Flooding can be a result of weather events or from home problems such as broken pipes or even poor drainage that causes flooding in the home. No matter the situation, it is important to be timely in taking steps to stop mold growth and to clean following a flood. Mold is a natural organism that thrives in moist conditions. When a home floods it creates just the right environment for mold to grow and develop colonies. Mold growth generally develops within 24-48 hours. It reproduces by spores and travels through the air, reducing indoor air quality. Wherever mold grows, it begins to break down the material whether walls, floors, ceilings, etc. This is why it is so important to try and remove all water as soon as possible to begin the drying out process and remove furniture and other items that may be affected. The quicker you can do this the better! This will help to remediate any mold that may have begun to develop. Be mindful that exposure to mold can cause health issues such as asthma attacks, eye and skin irritation, and allergic reactions, especially for individuals with immune compromised systems. Children are also at risk, so exclude them from flood clean-up.

Before cleaning

Sometimes it is advisable to turn off the main power to your flooded home. Also, check for downed power lines and gas leaks. You may need to have an electrician check your electricity before turning it back on.

- ◇ Remove all wet items. Toss items that don't completely dry out or cannot be salvaged.
- ◇ Dry your house by opening windows and doors. Add fans and a dehumidifier if necessary.
- ◇ Protect yourself by wearing an N-95 respirator, protective gloves, safety glasses and a hard hat if needed.
- ◇ Assemble cleaning supplies, including buckets, broom, mop, heavy duty trash bags, sponges, rags, Wet-Dry shop vacuum, non-ammonia detergent, and chlorine bleach.
- ◇ Do not touch mold with bare hands!

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Before you start make sure the work area is well ventilated. If you feel you aren't able to complete the work safely, seek professional help. Below are guidelines for cleaning different types of materials. For more details read the UGA Extension publication [Removing Mold in Your Home](#).

Clean hard surfaces such as wood, plastic, metal, glass, and other non-porous materials with a non-ammonia detergent and hot water. Disinfect the clean surfaces with a 10% bleach solution that you leave on the surface for at least 10 minutes before rinsing with clear water and allowing to dry.

Porous materials such as upholstered and particle board furnishings, rugs, bedding, clothing, and books and papers need to be evaluated before cleaning. Some items may be contaminated and need to be tossed out. A good rule of thumb is that if the item has been wet for less than 48 hours you may be able to clean and sanitize it. Be sure to completely dry items and monitor them for several days for any mold growth or for a moldy smell. If moldy, items should be discarded.

Finally, be sure to remove mold from you and your clothing. For further information on clean-up following a flood, contact your local [Extension office](#). For more information, visit the [Centers for Disease Control](#), and the [EPA](#) websites.

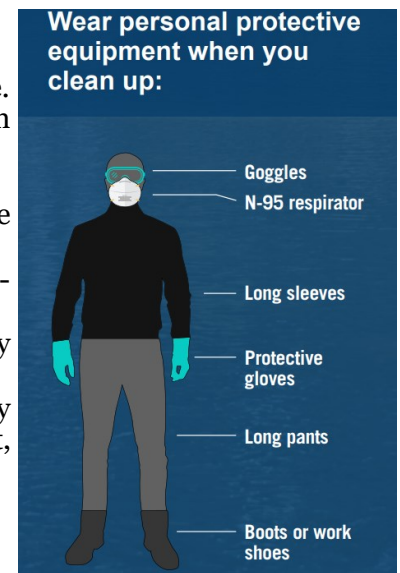


Image source: U.S. EPA



Restocking Your Emergency Kit

Written by Brittany Harrison, MS, Baldwin County FACS/4-H Extension Agent

Preparation is key to help stay safe in case of emergencies. When was the last time you checked your kit? Having a fully stocked kit that is up to date is the best way to keep your household safe and prepared! According to the American Red Cross, emergency kits should be reviewed and refreshed at least twice a year. Over time, items expire, documents become outdated, and your family's needs may change. Taking just a few minutes now to restock can save valuable time and stress later. Not sure where to start? Use the checklist below as a guide to ensure your kit is ready when it matters most.

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CHECK EXPIRATION DATES UPDATE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS ADJUST FOR THE SEASON CONSIDER YOUR FAMILY'S CHANGING NEEDS

Image designed by Brittany Harrison



Why You Should Test Your Well Water

Written by Teresa Adkins, Decatur County 4-H/FCS Extension Agent

Did you know that there are some naturally occurring chemicals in groundwater that exceed the EPA safety standards? For instance, some geographical areas are considered high in arsenic, lead and other chemicals that private well users may not realize are present. Water testing for private wells is not usually required or monitored by government agencies. However, it is a good practice to annually test your well water to establish a water-quality baseline should problems arise in the future.

Collecting a water sample is a simple and fairly inexpensive process and the local health department or county Extension office can give guidance. Although not an exhaustive list, UGA water specialists suggest testing private wells if any of the following situations apply.

- ◇ Family members begin having stomach issues.
- ◇ It is an older well or the well head has been damaged.
- ◇ There may be lead in the plumbing pipes or solder.
- ◇ New land development or construction nearby.
- ◇ Noticeable water stains on laundry or plumbing fixtures.
- ◇ Recent flooding or soil disruptions near the well.
- ◇ If there is a septic system is within 100 feet of the well.

For more detailed information, take a look at the UGA Extension [Household Water Quality](#) series of publications or contact your local [Extension office](#).

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner & Diane Bales ~

Keep bathroom mirror from fogging by applying a thin layer of shaving cream on the mirror and then wipe it off with a microfiber cloth.

Remove oil-based stains from plastic containers by adding a paper towel, dish soap and water to the container. Shake vigorously.

There is a right way to clean. Start at the top and work down, ending with the floor.

Keep a junk bowl to drop small items into until you decide where to store them. Make it a goal to empty the bowl at least monthly.



UGA Extension [Healthy Indoor Environments](#)
(healthyhomes.uga.edu)



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