



Flood Recovery **ANSWERS**

SDSU Cooperative Extension Service

Cleaning and Sanitizing Flood-soaked Bedding

Flood-soaked bedding should be laundered with an emphasis on thorough sanitation since floodwaters are filthy and germ-laden. Use the following procedures:

- * Hang out to air and dry completely, then brush off excess dirt and soil.
- * Do not overload a washer or dryer. Large or heavy loads need space to move freely in the washer and dryer.
- * Put wool **blankets** through a dry-cleaning process either at a commercial dry-cleaning plant or at a coin-operated facility. Shrinkage and thorough cleaning make wool blankets difficult to wash. For blankets that are washable (rayon, acrylic, cotton), put them through two complete washing cycles. Air-dry or use an automatic dryer at proper temperature settings.
- * **Sheets and pillow cases** should be put through two complete washing cycles. Bleach using diluted liquid chlorine bleach to help kill germs. Follow your regular drying procedure.
- * **Quilts and comforters** should be washed or dry-cleaned depending on fiber content of the bedding. Usually, it's best to wash cotton quilts.
- * If **pillows** are foam rubber or stuffed with feathers or fiberfill, put them through a regular washing cycle using sudsy lukewarm water. Do not overload the machine. Two pillows usually make a normal load. Stop the washing process mid-way and turn the pillows over by hand. Plan to use a non-chlorine disinfectant in the wash or rinse water for pillows containing foam, down or feathers. Use bleach on fiberfill pillows. Air-dry foam rubber pillows. There is danger of fire if they are put in an automatic dryer. Feather pillows may be dried in an automatic dryer at a low temperature setting or may be air-dried. Air-dried pillows can be fluffed up by hand as they are drying. Do not wash kapok and cotton-filled pillows. The cotton filling will become lumpy because water disintegrates kapok. These pillows be discarded.
- * **Mattresses:** Foam-rubber and urethane-foam mattresses are mildew-proof and odorless. The cover can be removed and machine-washed or you may want to discard it and buy a new cover. The foam mattress part can be thoroughly washed with a garden hose. Squeeze a detergent and water solution through the foam if possible. Reconditioning of other types of mattresses is too difficult to do at home. As a general rule, inexpensive mattresses are not worth the expense of reclaiming and should be discarded.

For more information contact your local county extension office.

Adapted from Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/disasterrecovery/info/soakedbedding.htm>