

Safety after a disaster

Farm Flood

After a disaster, property damage may cause unusual and additional safety hazards. Many disaster-related injuries and deaths occur during cleanup. Here's what to check:

Item	Action	Status
Electrical services and distribution panels	Have an electrical contractor or qualified electrical equipment servicing agency inspect and service electrical service equipment. They will open, clean and thoroughly dry the equipment. Replace electric circuit breakers, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and fuses that have been submerged. Water and silt inside these devices can prevent them from performing properly, and can cause electrical shorts or mechanical malfunctions. The only safe action is to discard and replace the device.	
Farm equipment (brooders and incubators)	Dismantle and thoroughly dry the box or cabinet. Replace insulation and internal wiring showing any signs of deterioration. Clean or replace thermostats. Treat fans as described under the Electric motors section. Treat electrical elements as described under Heating and cooking equipment . Have an electrician check all livestock electric heating units before use.	
Heating and cooking equipment	Damage to an electric range often includes soaked insulation and water-damaged switches and controls. Semi-enclosed elements may also be damaged. Electric heaters with sealed elements can be cleaned and dried. Thermostats may require replacement. Have your appliance service agency thoroughly check your range. The switches and controls on electric ranges are difficult to dry and may break down over time. Replacement may be necessary. The oven control may also fail due to moisture in the insulation. Newer ranges have sealed surface elements, which do not absorb moisture. Semi-enclosed elements can absorb moisture and will require replacement. Depending on the type and condition of the insulation on the internal wiring, proper drying out of the appliance may be all that is required. Your service agency can advise you of necessary repairs.	

Farm equipment (milking machines)	Treat the motor as described under Electrical motors . Flush out and sterilize all piping and lines. Service the pump assembly as described under Water systems .	
Water systems (pump mechanism)	If the pump mechanism is not a sealed unit, check for water and silt contamination. If it is contaminated, dismantle the pump, clean it and add fresh oil. Clean the inlet screen on the suction valve. Do not drain off old, contaminated oil until you are ready to clean and replace it; otherwise, interior pump parts may rust.	
Water systems (foot valve)	If the pump has a foot valve and screen, clean, flush and reinstall them before operating the reconditioned pump.	
Water systems (pressure switch and controls)	Service the pump controls as noted under Electrical service and distribution panels.	
Electric motors	Without proper servicing, do not use any appliance with a motor that has been wet. An electric motor showing signs of being wet should be completely serviced before use. Moisture that has entered the windings can cause the motor to short out and fail. This can present a shock or fire hazard. Dirt or silt in the bearings will cause premature bearing failure. A motor repair or rewinding shop should do this work. The rehabilitation of a flood-damaged motor will include: dismantling, cleaning, baking of the windings to remove moisture, re-assembly, re-oiling of bearings and testing.	