



# Flood Recovery **ANSWERS**

SDSU Cooperative Extension Service

## Cleaning Walls & Basement After A Flood

**Walls need special care following contact with floodwaters. Plastered walls and wallpaper need different treatments than painted walls or concrete block walls. The following recommendations will help you clean and sanitize your walls:**

1. Walls may be difficult to clean and dry. If insulated, the baseboards and some siding may need to be removed to ventilate wall cavities.
  - a. In some cases, insulation may also need to be removed, dried or replaced. Allow at least two months before applying paint because paint applied to damp walls will later blister and peel.
  - b. Plastered walls and wallpaper can be cleaned without replacing the paper. Allow plaster to dry thoroughly before washing it. Brush off any loose surface dirt.
2. Use mild soap or a non-sudsing commercial cleaner to wash a painted wall. Use one bucket of cleaning solution, another bucket containing clean water for rinsing, and large sponges for cleaning and rinsing.
3. Always start washing a wall at the bottom and work up. Ceilings should be done last.
4. After walls are cleaned and before wallpaper is replaced, paint or spray walls with a quaternary disinfectant, available from janitor or dairy supply outlets. Add one ounce or two tablespoons of the disinfectant to two gallons of water. This will make the walls mildew resistant. The same solution may be applied to washable wallpapers.

### **Cleaning basements with concrete walls and floors.**

1. Bail or pump out water and remove mud from the floor, then remove mud and surface film on ceiling, walls and floor with a coarse brush or long-handled broom. Spray or wet ceiling and walls with lukewarm water, then scrub with hot soapsuds. Repeat if necessary, using clean soapy water. Rinse walls and ceiling with a clear, lukewarm water moistened brush.
2. To remove odors, use a chlorine bleach solution.

**Use Bleach With Caution!** Persons involved in flood clean-up are urged to take special precautions when using bleach as a disinfectant.

- Bleach should not be mixed with other household cleaners, especially those containing ammonia.
- If an area has been cleaned with other products, make sure the area is thoroughly rinsed with uncontaminated water before bleach is used. Never mix bleach with other chemicals, cleaners or household products.
- **A solution of 1/2 cup bleach per gallon of water is recommended for general disinfectant use.**