

After flooding and severe weather events

Returning to your building – what you need to know

What the coloured building placards mean (if issued)

- **White placard** – Can be used – no restrictions on access

A 'white' placard means your house has suffered minimal or no damage and is in a condition where you can return to full occupation.

Some clean up may be necessary and some services may not yet be fully available (for example, boil water notices may be in place, power may be out).

- **Yellow placard** – Restricted Access – access is restricted to parts of the building deemed safe or it is safe to enter short term to remove possessions.

A 'yellow' placard means your house has suffered some damage and is not yet safe to permanently occupy – it should not be occupied overnight.

Some services may not yet be fully available (for example, boil water notices may be in place).

- **Red placard** – Unsafe – not safe for occupation or entry, or the building is at risk from an external hazard.

A 'red' placard means your house is uninhabitable. The placard is not a demolition order.

Read the placard information carefully – it will tell you important information about the status of your home.

The QR code on the placard provides a link to more information on placards, including removing or changing a placard, and offences and penalties if you don't comply with the placard.

Health, safety and hygiene

It may not be safe to return home even after the floodwaters have receded – only return home after Civil Defence and emergency services have told you it is safe to do so.

When you return to your home

- Wear appropriate safety gear – sturdy shoes, face mask and gloves to avoid injury, contamination and exposure to hazardous material
- Stay away from damaged areas
- Avoid doing anything that puts your safety at risk or causes more damage to your property
- Make your home safe, sanitary and weather-tight if you need to, but if possible don't do non-essential repairs – and keep copies of invoices for any repairs to essential services

- Throw away food and drinking water that has come into contact with floodwater, including canned goods – taking photos of perishable or unsanitary items before you dispose of them
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you have been advised it is safe to do so (eg a boil water or do not consume notice may be in place)
- Clean and dry your house or building and everything in it; this is because when things get wet for more than two days they usually get mouldy
- Use a battery-powered torch when examining buildings – don't use candles
- Don't use portable generators inside your house or garage.

If you need building repairs

For any works requiring a builder, plumber or electrician we recommend that you contact the Council's building team to obtain determine if you need a building consent or other approval for these works.

We prioritise building consents for works needed to repair flood damage to help our community in recovering quickly.

Getting a building consent means that you have the opportunity to ensure repairs are undertaken correctly and formally signed off.

Building consent application for flood affected buildings

You can apply for a building consent using our [electronic online consenting system](#).

Make sure that you identify your application as relating to a natural disaster by selecting the drop down box near the end of the online form.

Useful links

- Building consent application
<https://www.selwyn.govt.nz/property-And-building/building/applying-for-approvals/forms-and-checklists>
- Urgent notices on Council water services to your house or building
<https://www.selwyn.govt.nz/services/water/urgent-notices>
- Guidance on assessing water damage to plasterboard linings
<https://www.gib.co.nz/assets/Uploads/Christchurch-Earthquake-Assessing-water-damage.pdf>
- Advice from the Canterbury DHB on cleaning a house after flood damage
<https://www.cdhb.health.nz/media-release/cleaning-flood/>

For information and advice call 347 2800 or email contactus@selwyn.govt.nz at any time between 8:30am and 5:00pm.

Summary checklist

Before returning to your property, check

- You are allowed to return to your property with Civil Defence
- Floodwaters have safely receded from around your property
- See Council's website for [urgent notices on water services](#)
- With your power company that the electrical supply to your house or building is safe or disconnected.

When you return to your property

- Stay out of any building or house if floodwater remains in or around the building
- Check for damage to your land such as undermining and subsidence
- Report broken power lines to the appropriate authorities
- Examine walls, floors, doors, and windows to make sure that your house or building is not in danger of collapsing
- Have an engineer, building consultant or experienced builder check for structural damage to your house or building – if damage is significant notify your insurer as soon as you can
- Check and remove any sources of contamination on your property and particularly under your house or building (if located on piles)
- If your house or building is structurally damaged, in most cases your insurer will make a decision on whether
 - it can be repaired satisfactorily, or
 - if not, remove salvageable items and make arrangements for demolition

Insurance

- Contact your insurer as soon as possible to start the claim process
- Make your own record of flood damage by taking photos where you can
- Check with your insurer if you are to clean your property or if they will arrange someone to do it for you

Land damage

- Contact EQC (Toka Tū Ake) as soon as possible to start the claim process if your property has been subject to land damage as a result of the event

For further details see EQC's website: <https://www.eqc.govt.nz/get-help-now-claims/make-a-claim>

When you re-enter your house or building

- Watch for loose plaster, wall claddings and ceilings that could fall
- Look for fire hazards such as electrical utilities in a damaged house or building
- If you suspect sewage pipes are damaged avoid using the toilets and call a plumber
- If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker
- Have professionals check the following
 - engineer, building consultant or experienced builder to check your house or building for internal structural damage and unsafe conditions
 - electrician check that the electrical system is safe or turned off
 - plumber or drainlayer to check and reinstate the plumbing and drainage services if it is safe to do so
- If you have a septic tank get plumber or drainlayer to
 - check the effluent level of the septic tank,
 - empty it if necessary, and
 - check for structural damage
- Stay away from unsafe areas
- Talk to your insurer before you dispose of anything
 - they will talk you through their process and give their okay, as they'll want proof of loss
 - take photos of any items you are taking out of the house for sanitary reasons such as soft furnishings or carpet, but check first before you throw it out
 - this will help speed up assessments of your claims
- If you rent your property, contact your landlord and your contents insurance company as soon as possible

Cleaning up

- It is important to clean and dry your house and everything in it as quickly as possible because
 - flood water can make the air in your home unhealthy
 - mould can make people with asthma, allergies, or other breathing problems sick – so talk to your doctor if you have questions about cleaning or working in a home that has been flooded
- Open and keep open doors and windows as much as possible to help your house or building to dry out
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are certain it is not contaminated

- When cleaning
 - wear a mask, goggles, gloves, long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and boots or work shoes
 - you can clean and disinfect your property using ordinary household products
 - a garden hose is useful for washing down, but do not use high-pressure hoses as they can cause damage
- Remove
 - all removable wet items out of your house or building for cleaning and drying (remember to arrange dry storage)
 - electrical fittings and wet wall linings and insulation where necessary, then clean and disinfect your house or building
- Throw away
 - food and drinking water that has come in contact with floodwater, including canned goods and suitably store non-perishables
 - wooden spoons, plastic utensils, baby bottle teats and dummies if they've been covered by floodwater - don't try to clean them
 - anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned
- Disinfect metal pans and utensils by boiling them in clean or properly treated water
- Have an electrician hook up temporary electrical services if it is safe to do so
 - if you don't have power and using a generator, set up this up outside and well away from buildings to protect against build-up of toxic fumes
- Begin drying out the structure of your house or building
- Clean under your house or building and ancillary buildings
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspits, effluent and leaching systems as soon as possible
- Help others if you can, especially people who may need special assistance.

After your house or building has fully dried out

- Check with your insurance company who is doing what
- Obtain a building consent to carry out any remedial construction work (contact our building team for advice on whether or not the remedial work needs a consent)*
- If your building has untreated framing, we recommend that you paint the framing with a boron based timber preservative once moisture content is below 18% and before relining
- Install insulation, wall linings and finishing trim
- Complete electrical work
- Re-establish plumbing, connect waste pipes

- Recommission gas pipework and appliances
- Redecorate
- Refurnish your house or building.

*for information on work that is exempt from requiring building consent go to

<https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/check-if-you-need-consents/building-consent-exemptions-for-low-risk-work/schedule-1-guidance/>