

Flooding: America's No. 1 Natural Hazard

(NAPSA)—If you've ever had a flooded basement or other area, you're not alone. Flooding is the most frequent severe weather threat and the costliest natural disaster in the United States. Fortunately, while there's little you can do to combat Mother Nature, there are ways to protect yourself.

Regardless of whether the source is rain, snow or other disaster, it affects people all over the country and at any time of year. In fact, according to FEMA, 90 percent of all natural disasters in the U.S. involve some degree of flooding and cost homeowners millions of dollars in damage. One of the areas most often damaged in homes and businesses by flooding is the basement, where water can destroy electrical and HVAC systems.

What To Do

Once safety from fire and gas leaks has been assured, consider these helpful tips for protecting your valuable possessions and critical HVAC systems.

• **Water Removal:** High-efficiency portable utility pumps are now available for emergency water removal. They're designed as an alternative to gas- or diesel-powered portable pumps and can even work from your vehicle's 12-volt battery. They excel in environments requiring fast, efficient removal of concentrations of standing or floodwater. Visit www.getwaterout.com for more information.

• **Water Heating:** Whether a water heater uses gas, oil or electricity, if the ignition or burner elements were exposed to floodwater, the unit should be replaced. Contact a trusted contractor before activating the system. Learn more at www.ahrinet.org.

• **Waterproofing:** This is always a good strategy, and adding a sump pump and drainage system, and sealing the perimeter, can provide peace of mind. You can learn more by visiting www.bitly.com/basementtips.



Flooding occurs somewhere in the world every single day.

• **Furnaces and Boilers:** Even if water doesn't reach your HVAC system, the moisture and dampness can affect the controls, valves and other equipment. Inspect these components or have a contractor do so before use. Find information at www.naohsm.org.

• **Heat Pumps and Air-Conditioning:** If floodwater has repositioned either the indoor or outdoor units of a split system, there's a potential for refrigerant leaks. Consult a qualified professional. Find one at www.phccweb.org.

Although dealing with a flood can be a very traumatic experience, smart homeowners can turn misfortune into opportunity by replacing their damaged HVAC systems with new, energy-efficient products that can lower energy bills. The utility may know what federal tax credits or state energy rebates are available for installing new, energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment. Visit www.xylemappliedwater.com for information on energy-efficient equipment.

Where To Turn

Websites to have available in case of a natural disaster include:

- FEMA Emergency Preparedness: www.ready.gov
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- CDC Emergency Preparedness: www.emergency.cdc.gov