

REAL ESTATE WEEKEND

www.palmbeachclassifieds.com

Contents prepared by the Marketing Department

GUEST COLUMN

South Florida flood damage requires process to overcome

From avoiding potential disasters in the aftermath of a flood, to salvaging and treating furniture and personal valuables, what you do in the event of a flood is just as important as what you don't do.

By JOHN R. MATH
 Owner, Associated Property Management of the Palm Beaches, Inc.

Anyone who lives in South Florida may, eventually, experience flooding from heavy rains or storms - the vast amounts of rain that can be dumped in an area from a storm will simply overwhelm storm drains, drainage canals and retention ponds.

The water will have no other place to go but yards, swales and low-lying areas with homes. What can you do if this happens to you?

If downed power lines, broken gas lines or severed water mains are near your home, call 911 and report this immediately. If you smell any gas or noxious odors in your house, open the windows to let the fumes escape.

Do not smoke or use candles unless the gas has been turned off and the area is free of

all fumes; use a flashlight instead. If pilot lights are out for gas stoves, water heaters or dryers, let the gas company relight them. If the power is off, unplug appliances to avoid surges when the power is turned on.

When resetting circuit breakers, stand on something dry and nonconductive, use one hand, and reset the breaker with a dry wooden tool. Do not use appliances or motors that are wet unless they have been taken apart, cleaned and dried.

Do not walk through flowing water: Drowning is the No. 1 cause of flood deaths. Do not drive through flooded areas. Hidden debris and sewage may be in the puddles of water. Watch for insects, snakes and other animals that are searching for high ground.

Do not drink tap water unless you are certain it is safe. Make sure that the water is sterilized, either through boiling or through a mixture

of 16 drops of bleach for every gallon of water.

After the water recedes, you will begin to combat a growing mildew problem within your home. Painted surfaces such as wood trim and walls can be treated with a solution of three-quarters of a cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water. Scrub the solution on the surface, rinse and let dry.

Clothes can be treated by soaking them for 30 minutes in a solution of 2 tablespoons of chlorine bleach for every cup of water.

Wet drapes should be taken down and spread out to dry as soon as possible. After they have dried, they can be dry-cleaned.

Take area rugs outside to dry, but do not put them out in the sun or more damage may occur. Take water-stained rugs to a rug cleaner as soon as possible.

For wall-to-wall carpeting, remove the padding as soon as possible, because the pad acts as a sponge. Remove the carpet, then dry and disinfect the floors. The carpet may or may not be salvageable.

Furniture can be dried outside, but do not

put it in the sun. Remove all drawers and let them dry. You will need to call a wood refinisher to clean and treat the water damage, then seal the wood.

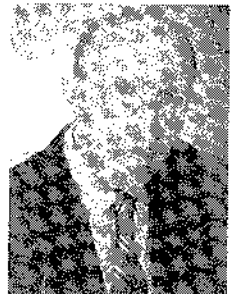
Dry out all books by standing them on end in an upright position, with the pages spread open. Damaged artwork and important papers should be saved so that restoration professionals can attempt to salvage the items.

When flood damage has occurred, contact your homeowners insurance agent immediately to determine whether the damage is covered by that policy. Generally, homeowners insurance will pay for rain damage that results from a faulty roof or broken window.

If you have a flood-insurance policy, call that agency as well, since that policy will cover the homeowner for rising waters and storm surges.

Useful Web sites include the Florida Division of Emergency Management at www.floridadisaster.org and the Palm Beach County Division of Emergency Management at www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/EOC/

For more information, call (561) 588-7210, assocpropmgt@bellsouth.net.



John R. Math

apm
 Associated Property Management
 of the Palm Beaches, Inc.

400 South Dixie Hwy., Suite 10,
 Lake Worth, FL 33460