

How to Save Upholstered Furniture, Carpet and Bedding

Articles that have been heavily contaminated with toxic chemicals such as concentrated pesticides or embedded fiberglass or asbestos should be thrown away. Many products labeled “dryclean only” and severely damaged textiles are already ruined. Due to sewage, pesticides and other unknown toxic materials in floodwaters, many clothing and interior textile (carpet, upholstered furniture, drapery) products should be thrown away.

Some household textiles can be saved. It’s important to use a disinfectant to destroy harmful bacteria that can remain alive on fabrics for a long time.

Upholstered Furniture

Remove padding. Plan to reupholster. Throw away all cotton stuffing and any other stuffing that is badly damaged, contaminated with sewage or other chemicals, or generally impossible to dry, clean or sanitize. Dry thoroughly using a fan and indirect heat. On some days the out-of-doors may be a good place for drying. To protect exposed wood, dry in the sun a short time only.

Carpet and Rugs

Throw away carpet and pad that is heavily contaminated with floodwater and residue. You may be able to save carpet soaked with cleaner groundwater.

Most wall-to-wall carpet that can be saved is best cleaned by a professional rug cleaner or restorer. If you try to restore carpet yourself, rugs and carpet that can be removed and the pad discarded will provide the greatest success (it holds large quantities of floodwater and residue). If possible, dry small rugs out-of-doors in sunlight. Carpets that are glued to the floor without pad can be cleaned in place. Use shop water vacuums as well as dry blankets and towels to blot up excess moisture.

Apply rug shampoo with a carpet shampooer according to manufacturer’s directions. Be sure to remove all detergent used in cleaning. Anytime detergent is left in the product, you will have real problems with accelerated soiling, and you need to be very careful to thoroughly remove any suds or detergent that you have added to the product.

Sanitize by sponging a weak chlorine solution (1/4 teaspoon chlorine bleach to 1 cup of water) or other sanitizing product applied according to label directions and rinsing several times with clear water sponged onto carpet. Do not replace carpet or rug until all subfloors are dry.

After shampooing, dry rugs or carpets quickly. Hang rugs on line if possible, or lay them out flat in a warm, dry place. Electric fans will speed up drying. Carpets and rugs should be thoroughly dried.

Bedding

Mattresses – It probably is best to throw out these products. A good innerspring mattress could be sent to a commercial renovating company; however, many communities will not have such a facility. If you do find such a service, check the cost and expected outcome. Odor may remain, and it may be less expensive to replace the mattress.

Pillows – Many pillows are relatively low cost. Best advice is to throw them away as they are very difficult to sanitize. You may want to try saving feather or down pillows. Contact your county Extension agent for additional information.

Sheets, Pillowcases, Towels and Other Linens – Use the “Directions for Cleaning Soiled Fabrics” on appropriate household cleaners. Refer to care label to determine if chlorine bleach can be used and the hottest water temperature that is safe.

Blankets, Quilts, Comforters – Use the directions on “Cleaning and Disinfecting Textiles” on appropriate household cleaners. Refer to the care label to determine if chlorine bleach can be used and the hottest water temperature that is safe. Wash only one blanket, quilt or comforter at a time. Some comforters will require an extra large commercial washer for best results. Following final washing procedure, heavy items should be rinsed at least three times in clear, warm water. Spin off water or gently squeeze out as much water as possible. When satisfied with results, you may dry in an automatic dryer at moderate heat setting, or dry in a warm room with a fan, or across two or three clotheslines. Put several bath towels in dryer with blanket, quilt or comforter to speed up drying.