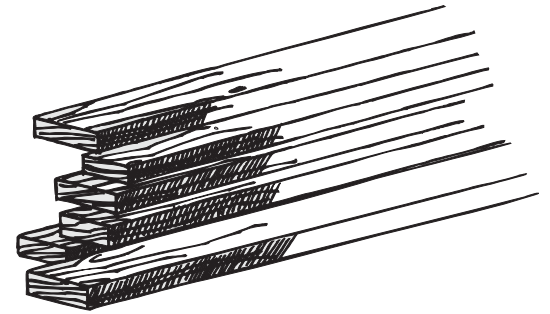


Dealing with Potential Moisture Problems after a Flood

Moisture problems in the walls, crawl space, or attic can lead to serious pest problems, such as wood-boring beetles and wood-decaying fungi in the floor joists. Mold and mildew growing on wood or insulation can also attract nuisance pests, such as plaster beetles, which can slowly build up in numbers and become a chronic problem. Keep a few important facts in mind:

- Mold or mildew growing on joists or beams does not mean that wood decay will occur.
- Wood-decaying fungi do not grow below the fiber-saturation point (28 to 30 percent moisture) of the wood.
- Problems with wood-boring beetles are less likely to occur when the wood's moisture content is lower than 15 percent. This level may be difficult to reach immediately.
- Do not seal up walls until the wood moisture content is as least down to 19 percent.
- You need a wood moisture meter to determine if you have excess moisture in your crawl space, attic, or framing wall.



The application of any pesticides at this point is NOT the solution to the problem. Your priority should be to complete permanent or temporary repairs and to allow any structural wood to dry out as quickly as possible. It may take some time to get the wood moisture down in the crawl space, but it is not impossible. Here are a few hints:

- Make sure foundation vents open properly and they are clear of debris.
- Remove standing water from the crawl space as soon as possible. Increase ventilation to the crawl space. This can be a simple matter of opening the crawl space door or using a fan to pull air OUT of the crawl space, assuming that

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weather conditions (and availability of electricity) allow you to do so. You may have to use some large-mesh metal screening over the crawl space door to keep

out animals, such as raccoons, opossums and skunks.

- Remove and replace place wet insulation in crawl spaces and walls.

For more advice on home repair and moisture control and reduction in storm-damaged areas, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center.



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