

# Muck & Gut Guide



Shrinking time  
between disaster  
and recovery.

Mucking and gutting is the first step in the rebuilding process. This phase of construction consists of removing damaged belongings from the home, removing damaged construction materials and prepping the home for mold treatment. The muck and gut process presents a set of health hazards. For this reason, protecting oneself against potential injuries or illnesses is extremely important. This guide provides a step-by-step overview of mucking and gutting and explains how to prepare the home and how to protect yourself. Following completion of a muck and gut the house must be dried out and properly treated for mold.

## Materials Needed:

Boots	Floor Scraper	Nitrile Gloves	Tile Chisel
Clorox Wipes	Hammers	Respirators (P-100)	Tyvek Suits
Contractor Garbage Bags	Hand Sanitizer	Safety Goggles	Utility Knives
Crowbar/Pry-bar	Hard Hats	Shovels	Water
Duct Tape	Leather Work Gloves	Sledge Hammer	Wheelbarrows

## Before You Begin:

- Make sure the homeowner has taken pictures of all damages before beginning work. These will be helpful for any future FEMA or insurance claims.
- Ensure that the electricity and gas are shut off to the property. Electricity can be shut off at the breaker box or exterior electrical panel. Gas can be shut off at the meter or via shut off valves to individual appliances.
- It may be helpful to also turn off the water to the home. This will prevent possible further water damage from incidentally damaged pipes during gutting. Water can be turned off at the water meter generally located in front of the home.
- Make sure the home is safe to enter. Inspect the roof and exterior of the home for damage that could compromise the structural integrity of the home.
- Before you enter the home, make sure you are wearing your respirator, tyvek suit, goggles, and gloves.

## Putting on PPE:

- Put on the tyvek suit over your clothing. If the suit does not include shoe covers, be sure to cover your footwear (footwear must be closed-toe).
- Put on nitrile gloves. Place leather work gloves over nitrile gloves.
- Put on goggles and respirator.
- The above equipment must be worn at all times when inside the home.



# Muck & Gut Guide

## Step 1 - Cleaning

- Clear out the home. Most items can be put in a pile beside the curb. Damaged items should be separated by material type. Ex. Furniture in one pile, electronics in another, drywall and insulation in another.
- Personal belongings affected by floodwaters must be removed from the home. Volunteers should be respectful when removing these belongings.
- DO NOT open the refrigerator. Tape or tie shut and place on curb.
- For homeowners mucking and gutting their own homes - if any of your belongings were affected by floodwaters, remove them from the home. Toxins and contaminants in floodwaters are often very harmful, and wet items can quickly become moldy.
- Place smaller items affected by floodwaters in contractor trash bags. Tape the bag shut and place beside curb.
- Both volunteers and homeowners should set aside any medical equipment or insured items, so that these items can be claimed as a loss in the days and weeks after damage was incurred.

## Step 2 - Mucking

- Begin mucking: Use a flat shovel to remove as much mud and debris as possible. This will reduce the chance of slipping and make it safer to move around the home.

## Step 3 - Gutting

- Remove affected baseboard, door trim, door casings, and doors from the home. Use a pry bar to wedge trim away from wall, and be mindful of exposed nails.
- Look for the waterline. This will serve as an initial point of reference when removing drywall.
- Remove drywall. If the home received below 4' of flooding, remove 4' of drywall - this will make the installation of new drywall much easier.
- Much like paper towel, water travels up drywall. Remove drywall at least 2' above the water line. If drywall is still damp, continue to remove further above the waterline.
- Remove insulation and place in contractor trash bags. Place bags on curbside. Insulation can be very irritating to the skin, eyes, and throat if proper protective equipment is not worn.

### Important:

- Mold grows quickly. Once the drywall is removed, assess the spread of mold. Mold growth higher than the water line will necessitate the removal of more drywall. Use a hammer to punch a hole in the wall to inspect the extent of mold growth.
- Be sure to wear a hardhat when removing drywall. Falling debris and hand tools can cause serious injury.
- Using a wheelbarrow to remove drywall from the home can make this phase much easier and reduce the chances of injury.



# Muck & Gut Guide

## Step 3 - Gutting Continued

- Remove cabinets and vanities from the home. Be sure the water and gas to any appliances or fixtures are cut off before attempting to remove. If you are unsure or do not feel comfortable doing so, contact a licensed plumber to ensure fixtures are disconnected properly.
- Removal of the shower/tub unit may be necessary to treat mold growth.
- Most ceramic tile flooring will not need to be removed. Inspect grout lines to ensure no cracks or openings are present, as mold can grow in these spaces and underneath tiles. If you are unsure if the tile was affected, remove an edge tile to see if moisture is present underneath it.
- Remove all nails/screws from exposed framing. This will make mold treatment much easier and safer. Be mindful when disposing of these and any items with exposed nails or screws.
- Use the floor scraper to remove any remaining debris or damaged flooring.

### Safety Notes

- Wearing the listed personal protective equipment is essential for the safety of volunteers, homeowners, and anyone inside the home. Toxins and contaminants in the mud leftover from floodwaters can be extremely harmful, especially to children and the elderly. Exposure to these contaminants may result in serious illness. Mold spores can stick to clothing, so be sure to wear a tyvek suit and thoroughly wash all clothes worn during this process.
- Protect open wounds or scrapes. If you sustain an injury during this phase, immediately clean and cover the wound.
- Watch out for animals such as snakes when removing items from the home.

### Important:

Take frequent breaks, and drink plenty of water. This work can be extremely physical and very hot, so be sure to monitor peers for signs of heat exhaustion and fatigue.