



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PEOPLE RE-OCCUPYING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND RESIDENTS RE-ENTERING THEIR HOMES

What steps have building owners and managers taken to ensure building safety?

Before building owners and managers allow residents and occupants to return, they have been required by New York City to assess and certify the stability and safety of their buildings. Specifically, no building may be re-occupied unless each of the following steps has been taken:

- 1) the structure has been thoroughly assessed for strength and stability;
- 2) gas service has been checked and restored, with the help of Con Edison;
- 3) electrical service is operating, and any exposed wires or damaged fixtures have been repaired or removed;
- 4) building water service is operating, roof water tanks have been flushed and re-filled and, if necessary, cleaned;
- 5) steam service has been checked and restored, where appropriate;
- 6) the building has been assessed for hazardous materials and if any have been found, they have been removed according to applicable regulations;
- 7) building mechanical systems have been inspected and cleaned and repaired, as necessary, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems;
- 8) the interior has been cleared of dust and debris.

In addition, New York City is requiring building owners and managers to communicate with building occupants and be available to answer questions regarding building conditions. If you have questions about any of the above issues, you should contact your building owner, manager, or superintendent.

What steps should I take upon returning to my workplace or home?

If you were evacuated from a residence or workplace south of Warren Street, west of Broadway, and north of Exchange Street, and have been approved to resume tenancy by your building manager, you are advised to wear a dust mask upon entering this area to decrease the possibility of dust inhalation and throat irritation. Outside these boundaries, masks are not necessary, but may be worn for your own comfort. If there is dust present indoors, it should not be necessary to wear this mask if you follow the cleaning procedures detailed below.

In a workplace, speak to your supervisor to see if there are special startup and cleaning procedure. In very dusty places, clean-up may be necessary before equipment can be restarted. Follow the cleaning procedures discussed below.

In your home, you should first make sure that conditions are safe. You should enter your home dressed in a long sleeve shirt and pants, and with closed shoes. Upon entry:

- Check for the smell of gas. If the apartment smells of gas, leave immediately and report it to your building manager and to Con Edison.
- Check for broken glass and fixtures. Wrap any broken glass in paper and mark it "broken glass." If large pieces of glass are broken, ask your building superintendent for instructions on disposal.
- Run hot and cold water from each of the taps for at least two minutes, or until water runs completely clean.
- Flush toilets until bowls are refilled. For air pressure systems, you may need to flush several times. If there are any problems with the toilet or plumbing system, call a plumber -- do not try to fix the problem yourself.
- Follow the cleaning procedures discussed below.

I have heard that asbestos was released from the collapse of the World Trade Center. What are the health effects of asbestos?

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Because some asbestos was used in the building of the World Trade Center, City, State, and Federal agencies have been collecting dust, debris, and air samples since the World Trade Center collapse. As expected, some asbestos was found in a few of the dust and debris samples taken from the blast site and individuals working in this area have been advised to take precautions. However, most of the air samples taken have been below levels of concern. Based on the asbestos test results received thus far, there are no significant health risks to occupants in the affected area or to the general public.

In general, asbestos-related lung disease results only from intense asbestos exposure experienced over a period of many years, primarily as a consequence of occupational exposures. The risk of developing an asbestos-related illness following an exposure of short duration, even to high levels, is extremely low.

What should I do with food left in my apartment?

The power outage in much of lower Manhattan may have caused refrigerated and frozen food to spoil. Raw or cooked meat, poultry and seafood, milk and milk-containing products, eggs, mayonnaise and creamy dressings, and cooked foods should be thrown out if power was out for two or more hours. Frozen foods that have thawed should be thrown away. Do not re-freeze thawed food.

Throw away any food that may have been contaminated with dust, except for food in cans, jars, or containers with tight-fitting lids. Wash cans and jars with water and wipe it clean. When it comes to food left in your building, *if in doubt, throw it out.*

How should I clean the dust in my apartment when I move back in?

The best way to remove dust is to use a wet rag or wet mop. Sweeping with a dry broom is not recommended because it can make dust airborne again. Where dust is thick, you can directly wet the dust with water, and remove it with wet rags and mops. Dirty rags can be rinsed under running water, being careful to not leave dust in the sink to dry. When done, used rags and mops should be put in plastic bags while they are still wet and bags should be sealed and discarded. Cloth rags should be washed separately from other laundry. Wash heavily soiled or dusty clothing or linens twice. Remove lint from washing machines and filters in the dryers with each laundry load. Rags should not be allowed to dry out before bagging and disposal or washing.

To reduce dust recirculation, the Health Department recommends using HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filtration vacuums when cleaning up apartments, if possible. If a HEPA vacuum is not available, it is recommended that either HEPA bags or dust allergen bags be used with your regular vacuum. If these options are not available, wetting down the dust and removing it as described above is recommended.

Carpets and upholstery can be shampooed and then vacuumed.

- If your apartment is very dusty, you should wash or HEPA vacuum your curtains. If curtains need to be taken down, take them down slowly to keep dust from circulating in the air.
- To clean plants, rinse leaves with water. Pets can be washed with running water from a hose or faucet; their paws should be wiped to avoid tracking dust inside the home.

How can I remove dust from the air?

Air purifiers may help reduce indoor dust levels. HEPA air purifiers are superior to other models in filtering the smallest particles. Air purifiers are only useful for removing dust from the air. They will not remove dust already deposited on floors, shelves, upholstery or rugs. Keep windows closed when using an air purifier.

Additional recommendations include:

- Keep outdoor dust from entering the home;
- Keep windows closed;
- Set the air conditioner to re-circulate air (closed vents), and clean or change the filter frequently;
- Remove shoes before entering the home for several days (once you first make sure there is no broken glass)
- Avoid sweeping or other outdoor maintenance.

For more information, call the Health Department's General Information Line at (212) 213 – 1844 or visit our website at nyc.gov/health.