

FOR RELEASE: Immediately
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SUBJECT: TIMELY TOPICS

Electrical Units Require Care After Flooding

All electrical wiring, appliances and motors damaged by floodwater should be checked by an electrician or competent person before any attempt is made to start them, according to Charles Schwab, Iowa State University Extension professor, Ag and Biosystems Engineering. Motors damaged by moisture and dirt can be burned out by careless starting and damp wiring will short out.

Where immediate use of electric power is essential and the permanent wiring is not yet dry, temporary lines may be run for some equipment, such as pumps.

No one should attempt to work on wiring, especially when it is wet, without turning off the main switch outside the house. Stand on a dry board even though the switch is in the open position when working on the entrance panel.

If you have any question about your electrical system and want information or help, check with the local electric power supplier. You can help, Schwab said, by following some of these points:

1. Wiring must be completely dried out.
2. If plaster is weak and must be replaced, take advantage of the resulting openings to circulate warm air between the framework and siding. This will speed up the drying of concealed wire.
3. Remove covers from switches, convenience outlets, light outlets and junction boxes that have been under water.
4. If the junction box is filled with mud, remove screws holding the receptacle or switch in the box. Pull receptacle, switch and wires in junction boxes out about two inches from the box. Clean out mud and dirt. Do not remove electrical connections. Leave the boxes open.

5. Remove fuses and cover from the entrance panel. Clean out mud. Wires can be moved, but do not disconnect.

After these things have been done and the wiring has had a chance to dry, an electrician can check the system without delay.

For electric motors and generators, contact an electrician or electric repairperson. For radio and television sets, refrigerators, home freezers and electric water heaters that have been damaged, call a competent serviceperson. Amateur attempts at cleaning and drying radio or television sets can do more harm than good.

Electric irons, lamps and ranges probably can be cleaned at home. Remove the plate of your electric iron, and clean and dry the iron element and mechanism. Check the cord carefully, and clean and dry the plug. Give special care to the cord and plug of a damaged electric lamp. The switch also should be cleaned and dried. Clean and dry the wiring switches, controls, plug and cord of your electric range.

Contact the UW-Extension, Jefferson County Office at 920-674-7196 for more information.

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