

ENVIRONMENTAL HOME

Even experts battle flooding at home

By Dan Howard

For TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

Today's mold lesson started with the yummy but greasy cheese dip stain on my shirt.

There is great irony in this tearful saga. Mold is needed to make the cheese that made the dip that stained the shirt, **the shirt** that needs anti-stain treatment ... in the flooded house that Dan did not build.

It started with a wonderful Sunday dinner out with the kids and grandson. It was a good meal, a pleasant restaurant and a great time. The appetizer was a very tasty, gooey cheese and spinach dip with chunks of bread for dipping into that delightful cheese mixture.

One of my "dips" turned into a "drop" between the plate and my mouth. Oops!

On the way home from dinner, my wife and I discussed what she thought I should write about this week. She usually has the inside story on what readers would be thinking about, and she had a couple of greatly appreciated suggestions.

We pulled into our driveway and realized that we had missed a heavy rain storm. The newly planted flowers were laying on their sides in exhaustion from the drenching. Great! They will stand up again and I get out of watering them the next day.

Please let me explain in my own defense. This is a new home to us, and I have not yet learned everything about the place. On this glorious evening, I learned that when there is a very hard storm, water comes under the basement door and spreads across the basement.

What Does a Mold Expert Do When It is His House That Floods?

Back to the stain on my shirt. I walked downstairs into the basement while taking my shirt off. As I stepped onto the concrete floor, there was a sloshing noise — not the leather shoe on concrete shuffle appropriate for a multitasking senior with his shirt halfway over his head.



GETTY IMAGES

No matter what the source of the water is, it's important to know what steps you should take in the event your home is damaged by flooding, in order to protect your family and possessions.

Recognizing that multitasking was not getting me where I wanted to go, I completed the easiest task at hand — taking the shirt off — and treated the stain.

I started a new "to-do" list based upon my discovery of why the shoes made a slosh instead of a shuffle. The next step was to consult a mold or disaster recovery professional.

Oh, that's me.

I looked around to see why there was water on the floor and — whatever that cause was — whether it had stopped. I knew that if the source of water had not ended, stopping the water leak would be the next step.

The water leaked under the basement door. The rain had stopped, and therefore the cause of the water event had ended. That was good news.

Next, I triple checked that there was not a potential electrical hazard relating to the abundant pool of water in the area.

If there was a potential hazard,

such as wet walls with outlets or an extension cord lying in the water, I would have to exercise great caution. The choice was to safely turn off the electricity or think of "Jaws" and stay out of the water.

I removed anything that was still absorbing water or being damaged because of standing water.

That included the cardboard box of decorations that was moved downstairs two days ago because the kitchen cabinets were being delivered the next day.

The next step was to get out the wet/dry shop vacuum and begin sucking up the standing water.

I observed sadly that the shop vac first had water moving toward the wand and then running back onto the floor from the end of the wand. It was like watching someone going up the first section of a two-level escalator and then turning around and going back down the escalator rather than to the upper floor.

I reminded myself to not panic

when realizing that the nice, easy-to-carry shop vac was purchased because it was small and light, though not strong enough to suck a pool of water in a basement.

I went to "Plan B" and took the top off of the floor drain, grabbed a broom and swept water into the floor drain.

It was time to take photos of the current condition — and be grateful that my wife did not upload a YouTube video of my panic and frantic efforts to this point.

The next step? Throw out the very few wet cardboard boxes. I was grateful to be a mold-aware person who knows that basement storage should be plastic bins and not cardboard. Cardboard is the "Breakfast of Champions" for odor-causing mold and wood-destroying insects.

Without standing in any water, I set up the dehumidifier, placing the water drain hose into the floor drain.

Then I found a shirt that did not

have an appetizer stain front and center and put on the clean shirt realizing, sadly, I was not a good sight to see when bare chested.

Always be grateful if you catch the water problem before it does any damage, and consult with your environmental person.

In this particular case, that was accomplished by inward reflection: "Self, have you followed the proper procedures? If not, go do what you should have done."

After all the panic and work, it was time to write this article, which was due the next morning.

In summary, when faced with an unexpected and unwanted water event:

- Identify the source of the leak
 - Stop the source of the leak
 - If it's beyond what you can handle, call a professional
 - Document conditions for insurance
 - Verify that electricity isn't a hazard
 - Remove anything that can be damaged by water and dry it
 - Remove, sweep or suction standing water
 - Dehumidify (or if you can't, open windows)
 - Realize that you have 24-48 hours to dry out before mold is a problem
 - When appropriate, seek professional drying services
 - Focus on the fact that mold and odors can damage health and the value of a home
- And one last thing on my list:
- Install an exterior drain or concrete curb so that this doesn't ever happen again!

Find additional links and a .pdf copy of this article at: Envirospect.info/basementflood.

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