Preparing to Evacuate – What to Do in Your Home

If flood waters threaten, but you haven't yet been advised to evacuate, use any remaining time to protect your home and belongings from flood damage:

1. Fill available containers, including bathtubs, with water. If water systems become contaminated by flood water, your only safe water will be what you have on hand.
2. Move important items such as food, furniture, rugs, books, clothing, electric motors, and controls to upper floors.
3. Collect valuables, important legal papers, computers, and small appliances (such as toasters) and secure them in plastic bags. Move them to upper floors. Having a stock pile of 10, 20, and 30 gallon plastic bags may be an incredibly valuable investment to protect belongings.
4. Anchor outside belongings or move them inside. Trash cans, toys, lawnmowers, furniture, tools, and buckets could wash away, becoming hazards downstream.
5. Seal wells to keep out silt and debris.
6. Shut off utilities (electricity, water, gas) at main switches. DO NOT TOUCH ELECTRICAL SWITCHES WHILE WET OR STANDING IN WATER.
7. Remove articles from the basement, and open basement windows so water can enter. Most residential basement walls and floors are not built to withstand the additional external pressure of water-soaked soil. During a flood you will have less damage to your house if you allow the water to enter. Water pressure on the inside will then equalize that on the outside, and prevent caving-in of basement walls, or buckling of basement floor.
8. If possible, move frozen food to a safe location where flooding or power failure is not likely. If it appears that the flooding will be lengthy and the power will be out for several days, it might be wisest to accept the loss of frozen foods and empty the freezer prior to leaving making clean up easier.
9. If your home has a water softener, you should consider ways to protect it and the softener salt from contamination.
10. Don’t forget the pets. Never leave domestic animals locked up or chained when there is a potential for flooding. Federal regulations allow for domestic pets and service animals to have access to evacuation services.