

REPAIRING FLOOD DAMAGED HOMES – COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, DRAFT 5/16/14

Prepared for the Travis Austin Recovery Group, TARG and the AUSTIN HOUSING REPAIR COALITION

Here is a list of the questions we have heard from owners of flood-damaged homes and the answers that the City of Austin Staff have provided so far.

GETTING STARTED

1. **Is there still assistance available to helping me remove trash and damaged building materials from my home?**
Yes. Austin Resource Recovery continues to remove construction materials, bulk items, and other debris from the flood areas at least twice per week. Residents must place all materials at the curb for pick up. In addition, crews will collect additional bags of trash on the weekly scheduled trash pick-up day at no extra charge.
2. **Is there special equipment that I need to wear if trash and damaged materials have been in my house for several months?** The Health Department recommends the use of professional remediation/restoration specialists. An air filtration mask (N-95 respirator), eye protection, heavy gloves and high ankle, steel-toed boots may be required for personal safety.
3. **Are there tests for mold and/or other materials that need to be conducted before or after materials are removed?** The Health Department does not specialize in mold remediation. An option for these concerned residents would be to contract a mold test/remediation professional and identify exposure. Another option would be for them to submit a sample to a private lab directly or consider purchasing and using a mold test kit on their own and evaluating their own findings.

REPAIR

4. **If my house was damaged by flood, what standards do I and my contractors need to meet?** When meeting the minimum requirements of a life safety permit, the City of Austin has adopted the 2012 International Property Maintenance Code and local amendments that set standards for all homes in Austin that need repair.
5. **Will City inspectors provide me a checklist of all items that need to be repaired, and whom do I contact to get this list for my home?** A layout inspection can be scheduled to give you the opportunity to ask questions and review the requirements.
6. **What if I don't have enough insurance money and other resources to make my house meet all of these maintenance standards?** There is some assistance available from the City of Austin through the Austin Housing Repair Coalition (see the attached contact sheet), Austin Energy, Texas Gas Service, and others to help you get the repairs you need. The assistance is subject to meeting program(s)' eligibility and requirements.
7. **Whom do I contact to get City or Texas Gas Service assistance?** A plumbing permit is required. Once the plumber makes repairs verifies system is code compliant and provides a pressure test a temporary gas final can be scheduled if a mechanical permit was obtained than a mechanical temporary gas will need to be scheduled. These permits will remain in a temporary status until final inspection passes. Once the temporary inspections are approved the homeowner must notify and schedule with a Texas Gas Service representative by calling 1-800-700-2443 to restore service.
8. **What are the qualifications for receiving repair work from the City of Austin?** You must be income eligible (see the attached contact sheet), and own and live in your home and other minor requirements.
9. **Will I and my contractors need permits and inspections?** Yes, and some contractors will need licenses (such as electrical, heating and air conditioning, and plumbing).

10. **How will the inspection process work?** All of the repairs will need to be inspected by the City and passed by City inspectors before insulation and sheetrock can be replaced and inspected. The inspection process can be explained to you at the permit center when the building permits are pulled.
11. **What if an inspection fails?** Then the contractor must fix the problem and call for a re-inspection, and that re-inspection must pass before the work can be covered.
12. **Can you tell me how this repair and inspection process will generally work?** There are two different paths, depending on whether the owner is performing repairs or is receiving City assistance (see attached flow chart). Step One – Secure permit and remove all damaged materials from your home. Step Two – Secure bids from contractors who are available to perform repairs. Step Three – Identify funds that may be available to pay for these repairs, including funds from the Austin Repair Coalition and others. Step Four – Negotiate contracts with all contractors before work begins, and agree that they will be paid as inspections are approved. Step Five – pay each contractor for the part of the work that has passed inspection and meets the conditions of the contract you negotiated. Step Six – Make final payments after all inspections pass. The City of Austin recommends keeping all your receipts from any repair work.
13. **Once all work is complete, you must receive a final inspection that will “close” the permit.** It is very important for you, your plumber, electrician, heating and air conditioning partner to receive passed final inspections. You should require proof of inspections passing before making payments to the contractors. The City of Austin will not close permits until it has determined whether a property received substantial damage. The City is currently in the process of identifying substantially damaged structures. The City of Austin recommends keeping all your receipts from any repair work.
14. **Will I have to change the foundation so that is now one foot above the 100 year flood plain level?** Homes which are determined by the City of Austin to have sustained substantial damage are required by City and federal code to be brought into compliance with all current floodplain regulations including finished floor elevation requirements. The City is in the process of identifying substantially damaged structures. If your home falls into this category, you will be required to bring it into compliance with current code. This could mean agreeing to be part of a City buyout program, if available, or making additional improvements to the property to bring it into compliance including rising the foundation.
15. **Will I have to have my electrician replace all water damaged receptacles/plugs, and switches?** Yes
16. **Can Austin Energy assist me in replacing damage to my heating, ventilation and air conditioning system?** Yes
17. **Can Texas Gas Service assist me in replacing gas stoves and water heaters?** Yes
18. **What will be the Repair Coalition priorities for fixing houses?** If a homeowner is income qualified for Repair Coalition assistance, then the Coalition partners with homeowners whose homes are not scheduled for purchase by the City on a first-come, first serve basis. The agency will design the scope of work with you. In addition, they will hire and pay the contractors to do the work.
19. **Can I get my home fixed by the Repair Coalition if I have accepted an offer for the City to purchase my home?**
Can I get my home fixed by the Repair Coalition if I have a pending offer from the City to purchase my home?
Due to limited resources, the City of Austin through its GO Repair! Repair Program is first evaluating and prioritizing home repair needs for households who have not received a buyout offer.
20. **Can I get my home fixed by the Repair Coalition if my home is on a list of possible purchases in the future but there is no current offer to purchase?** Yes, but the City of Austin recommends keeping all receipts from the repair work.
21. **Can I remain in my home if repairs are still needed?** Yes, unless the City has ordered you to vacate your home due to dangerous building conditions or because you have agreed to move out of the home as a condition of City purchase of your home once you close the sale.