OTTAWA FLOOD RESTORATION

Mould After a Flood

Mould after flooding: Health Canada size lines, when to hire a professional, no air tests, no bleach

4 Expert Answers from Flood Repair IQ

ottawafloodrestoration.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Mould behind the drywall after a flood in Orleans: does all of it come out?

When mould is found behind drywall after a flood, Health Canada says to hire a professional for any patch larger than three square metres, for sewage-contaminated flood water, or where flooding has penetrated into wall or ceiling cavities. If flood water got into the wall cavity, that last condition applies, so a professional assessment decides what comes out.

What the guidance says about wall cavities

Health Canada says to remove finished walls completely if the water level was several feet high, if many days passed before the water was drained, or if the area was very humid for an extended period. Ottawa Public Health says to remove and discard porous, wet building materials such as drywall and insulation that have been exposed to flood water.

Health Canada also states there is no safe limit for mould, and does not recommend testing the air for mould.

What the scope of removal depends on in your case:

- how high the water reached and how long it sat
- whether the flood water included sewage, which Health Canada lists as a reason to bring in a professional
- how much of the wall cavity was exposed before drying began
- whether the insulation behind the drywall was removed early or left in place

On the rebuild side, replacing insulation with a different type than the original requires a building permit from the City of Ottawa; replacing drywall is worth confirming with Building Code Services, since the City lists finishing a basement as a permit project and does not list drywall replacement either way.
If your flooding happened on July 1, 2026, check the province's map to see whether your property falls in the Graham Creek or Stillwater Creek area, where Ontario's Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians was activated; applications had to be submitted by November 16, 2026.

For mould removal beyond small areas, ottawaabatement.com covers that work.

Start with the contractor who will open the walls: they can tell you what they find in the cavity and give you a written scope before any material is discarded, and share it with your insurer.

Q2

Does a contractor need IICRC certification to handle flood mould in Ottawa?

We found no Ontario rule that requires a mould contractor to hold IICRC certification, and we found no restoration, flood or mould licence among the 144 trades prescribed under Ontario Regulation 876/21, and IICRC is a private credential, not a government licence.

That said, Health Canada does name IICRC as one sign of a qualified mould professional, alongside other indicators. It is one data point you can ask about, not a pass-or-fail requirement. WSIB says people who own or run a business in construction, with or without employees, must have coverage (with some exceptions). Ask for a clearance certificate before work begins.

The scope of the mould work matters for who should do it. Ottawa Public Health says homeowners may clean small patches of mould, three square metres or less. Health Canada recommends hiring a professional where the affected area is larger than three square metres, where the flood water included sewage, or where flooding has penetrated wall, ceiling or floor cavities. For work beyond those small patches, ottawaabatement.com covers mould removal in Ottawa.

A few things worth asking any contractor before you commit:

- What training or credentials does the person doing the work hold, and can you see documentation?
- Will the scope of work be described in writing, including what gets removed, what gets treated and what gets rebuilt?
- Does the contractor carry liability insurance, and can you see a current certificate?

Your insurer may also have a view on who does the mould work and how it is documented. Ask in writing how contractor selection and payment work under your policy. Health Canada does not recommend testing the air for mould.
Before any contractor starts, make sure you have a written contract that sets out the full scope of work, the price, and the start and completion dates, so there is no dispute later about what was agreed.

Q3

Should I bleach the studs after a flood in my Nepean basement?

Health Canada says not to use bleach to clean up mould. That guidance applies whether you are treating studs, framing or any other surface after a flood.

Health Canada also says bleach is not necessary to clean up mould. It says there is no "safe" limit for mould indoors, and does not recommend testing the air for mould. What matters for studs specifically is when the framing dried: Ottawa Public Health says that if you can clean and dry building materials within 48 hours, it is unlikely mould will develop, which is not a guarantee.

For the studs themselves, the practical question is whether they stayed wet long enough, or were exposed to sewage-contaminated water, to warrant professional assessment rather than a homeowner clean. Ottawa Public Health says homeowners may clean small patches of mould, defined as three square metres or less. If the affected area on your framing is larger than that, if the flood water came from a sewer backup, or if mould has reached into wall or ceiling cavities, Ottawa Public Health and Health Canada both point toward a professional. For mould removal beyond small areas, ottawaabatement.com covers that work.

One thing worth confirming before you do anything to the framing: if your home was built before 1990, the City of Ottawa notes that properties of that age may have asbestos, and recommends checking with a professional before any repair or demolition work.

On the structural side, if any of the framing looks damaged, twisted or compromised, the City's Building Code Services page notes that removal or replacement of structural framing requires a building permit, and suspected structural damage warrants a suitably qualified professional such as a professional engineer.

Ask your insurer, in writing, what documentation they need for treated or discarded materials before you proceed, and keep any receipts for products or labour.

Get a written assessment of the framing from a flood repair contractor before deciding whether cleaning, drying or replacement is the right path for your specific situation.

Q4

The flooded Gloucester basement smells musty after drying. Is that mould?

A musty smell after drying is a sign that mould may be present, though the smell alone does not confirm it. Health Canada does not recommend testing the air for mould.

If the water sat for many days, if the basement was very humid for an extended period, or if the water level was several feet high, Health Canada's guidance is to remove finished walls completely. Ottawa Public Health states that porous, wet building materials such as drywall, insulation and ceiling tiles should be removed and discarded.

On scope: Ottawa Public Health says homeowners may clean small patches of mould, three square metres or less. For a single patch larger than three square metres, for any area where flooding has penetrated into wall or ceiling cavities, or where sewage-contaminated water was involved, Health Canada recommends a qualified professional. Mould removal beyond small areas is handled by abatement contractors; ottawaabatement.com covers that work.

A few things shape what comes next for your basement:

- Whether the water came from a sewer backup: Health Canada recommends a professional where flood water was contaminated with sewage.
- The age of the building matters: the City of Ottawa notes that properties built before 1990 may contain asbestos, so check with a professional before any repair or demolition work.
- Health Canada does not propose a health-based exposure limit for mould indoors, so there is no number to test against.

What to have in writing: ask any contractor to identify every surface where mould is visible or suspected, describe what materials will come out, explain how the space will be dried and ventilated after removal, and confirm what goes back and in what form.
Ask the contractor for an itemized quote that names each material coming out, the drying method and equipment, and the replacement scope so you can compare it against what your insurer or adjuster has approved.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Flood Restoration. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before repairs start. Removing drywall so insulation can dry needs no building permit; replacing insulation with a different type or replacing framing does. Information is current as of November 22, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawafloodrestoration.ca** for the latest answers.