OTTAWA FLOOD RESTORATION

Power, Gas & Re-entry

When it is safe to go back in: the Electrical Safety Authority, Licensed Electrical Contractors, gas appliances and carbon monoxide

8 Expert Answers from Flood Repair IQ

ottawafloodrestoration.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Why keep an ESA Certificate of Acceptance after an Ottawa flood?

The ESA Certificate of Acceptance is your written proof that a Licensed Electrical Contractor inspected and filed a notification with the Electrical Safety Authority after flood damage, and that ESA confirmed the electrical system was safe to re-energize.

The ESA's own guidance says that after flooding, a Licensed Electrical Contractor must check the home's electrical system, file the notification, and that ESA then tells the utility when it is safe to reconnect power. The Certificate of Acceptance is what ESA issues at the end of that process. ESA specifically says to ask for a copy for your records and for insurance purposes, so keep it with your flood repair records.

On the insurance side, your policy wording governs what documentation is needed; ask your insurer in writing what it wants for electrical repairs. The ESA's flood page also warns that hiring an unlicensed contractor or attempting repairs yourself could delay your power being reconnected and affect insurance claims.

A few things worth keeping alongside the certificate:

- the Licensed Electrical Contractor's invoice, showing what was inspected or replaced
- photographs of the electrical panel, outlets and any replaced wiring before walls are closed
- any written communication from your insurer about the electrical scope of the claim

ESA's water-damage guideline, revised May 1, 2025, says that in many cases replacement of the affected wiring and equipment is the only safe alternative, even if no visible damage is apparent, so the certificate also records that the work was assessed under those rules. If any of it was replaced, keep the LEC's list of what changed.
If walls have not yet been closed after the electrical work, photograph the panel, the wiring runs and any replaced devices now, and store those images with the certificate before anything is covered up.

Q2

Should the kids stay out of the basement during flood cleanup in Riverside South?

Yes, children should stay out of the basement during flood cleanup. Health Canada states that children should never handle water and materials contaminated by sewage, and Ottawa Public Health says to treat all floodwater and surfaces that have been in contact with floodwater as contaminated.

The concern goes beyond sewage. The Electrical Safety Authority states that if water has risen above the electrical outlets, baseboard heaters, furnace or electrical panel, no one should enter the basement until the local electric utility has disconnected the power. That applies to everyone.

Even after power is confirmed off and the water is gone, the cleanup environment involves protective gear: gloves, eye protection, a mask and rubber boots. Health Canada recommends this for anyone handling flood-affected materials. Ottawa Public Health also says to remove and discard porous, wet building materials such as drywall, insulation and ceiling tiles.

A few things to keep in mind for the adults doing the work:

- The TSSA has noted that drying fans can create negative pressure that allows carbon monoxide from household appliances to re-enter the home, so ventilation matters.
- Health Canada recommends making sure a working carbon monoxide detector is in place when drying out a house.
- The City of Ottawa notes that properties built before 1990 may contain asbestos, so check with a professional before any repair or demolition work begins.

Once the basement is structurally safe, power has been restored by the utility following an inspection by a Licensed Electrical Contractor, and a certified gas technician has cleared any gas appliances, reassess. Until then, keeping children and anyone not directly involved in the cleanup out of the area is the straightforward call.
Get written confirmation from the Licensed Electrical Contractor and the gas technician before anyone re-enters the space for anything other than supervised, protective-gear work.

Q3

Our furnace sat in flood water in Orleans. Can it be turned back on?

A furnace that sat in flood water cannot be turned back on by the homeowner. The City of Ottawa states that after a home is flooded, a certified gas technician must turn your gas service back on, and your gas utility advises that a licensed technician inspect any water-damaged equipment before it is used again.

The concern is not just the gas supply. ESA's flood guidance states that allowing equipment and wiring to dry out and then reenergizing it is not a recommended practice. If flood water reached the furnace's electrical components, the furnace has both a gas and an electrical problem. ESA says to hire a Licensed Electrical Contractor to check your home's electrical system; that contractor files a notification with ESA and can give you an ESA Certificate of Acceptance for your records and insurance purposes. ESA then tells the utility when it is safe to reconnect power.

On the gas side, a licensed technician inspects the water-damaged furnace; ask for the findings, and whether it can be restored or must be replaced, in writing. Do not attempt to relight any appliance yourself. TSSA also notes that drying fans used during cleanup can create negative pressure, allowing carbon monoxide from household appliances to re-enter the home, so make sure there is a working carbon monoxide detector in place while the house is being dried out.

For insurance purposes, the City advises photographing and documenting damaged property before beginning cleanup, where it is safe to do so, and keeping all receipts. Whether a flood-damaged furnace is covered depends entirely on your policy wording, since overland flood and sewer-backup coverage are optional add-ons under Canadian home insurance. Canada.ca notes that coverage for flooding is not typically included in a standard policy. Ask your insurer in writing what documentation they need for a furnace claim and how replacement versus repair is handled under your policy.

Before anyone removes or discards the furnace, photograph it from every angle, note the make, model and serial number, and keep any paperwork that came with it, so the record is there for both your insurer and the technicians who assess it.

Q4

Water reached the outlets in my Alta Vista basement. When can I go back down?

The Electrical Safety Authority is clear: if water in your basement has risen above the electrical outlets, do not enter the basement. Wait until the local electric utility disconnects the power.

After that disconnection, the next step is not simply walking back down. The ESA states that allowing equipment and wiring to dry out and then re-energizing it is not a recommended practice. In many cases, replacing affected wiring and equipment is the only safe path forward. That means hiring a Licensed Electrical Contractor to inspect your home's electrical system before power is restored. The LEC files a notification with the ESA, and you should ask for a copy of the ESA Certificate of Acceptance for your records and for your insurance file. The ESA then tells the utility when it is safe to reconnect.

The ESA's water-damage guideline marks submerged residential panelboards and wiring devices for replacement; the LEC will assess what applies to your situation.

Before the LEC's visit, there are a couple of things worth having ready:

- A record of the water level, including photos if you took them before the water receded.
- Any documentation your insurer has asked for; ESA says to keep the Certificate of Acceptance for your records and insurance purposes.

If you also have a gas furnace or water heater in that basement, the City of Ottawa states that a certified gas technician must turn your gas service back on after a flood. That is a separate step from the electrical work, not a combined one.
Once the utility has disconnected power and you have the LEC's assessment in hand, you will know what electrical work is required before anyone, including the contractor doing the flood repairs, can safely work in that space.

Q5

The panel in my Westboro basement got wet. Does the wiring have to be replaced?

When flood water reaches an electrical panel, the ESA's position is clear: do not enter the basement until the local electric utility has disconnected the power. After that, the ESA says to hire a Licensed Electrical Contractor (LEC) to check the home's electrical system, and the ESA specifically states that "allowing equipment and wiring to 'dry out' and then reenergizing it is not a recommended practice."

Whether the panel and wiring are replaced in full, in part, or inspected and cleared depends on what the LEC finds. ESA's water-damage guideline says that in many cases, replacement of the affected wiring and equipment is the only safe alternative, even if no visible damage is apparent, and it marks residential panelboards and wiring devices for replacement when submerged. What the ESA does say is that the LEC files a notification with the ESA, and that you should ask for a copy of the ESA Certificate of Acceptance for your records and for your insurance file. The ESA then tells the utility when it is safe to reconnect power.

Ask the LEC to put in writing what was submerged and what they recommend replacing.

On the insurance side, your policy wording decides what electrical repairs are covered. Ask your insurer in writing how contractor choice and payment work under your policy, and keep every receipt from the moment you call the LEC forward.

Before you sign anything with a flood repair contractor for this job, ask them in writing exactly which electrical work they are including in their scope and which parts they expect the LEC to handle separately.

Q6

Who relights a water heater after a basement flood in Kanata?

Not the homeowner. Your gas utility's guidance is clear: do not relight appliances yourself, and have a licensed technician inspect any water-damaged equipment before it is put back into service.

The City of Ottawa adds that after your home is flooded, a certified gas technician must turn your gas service back on. If water rose above the electrical outlets, baseboard heaters, furnace or electrical panel, the Electrical Safety Authority says not to enter the basement until the local electric utility disconnects the power, and to hire a Licensed Electrical Contractor, who files a notification with ESA; ESA tells the utility when it is safe to reconnect.

If someone comes to your door offering a new water heater after the flood, know that water heaters are restricted door-to-door products under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002: a business can contract for one at your home only if you contacted it first and invited it. Any direct agreement over $50 must be in writing, and you may cancel it until 10 days after you receive the written copy.

For your records and your insurance claim, ask the gas technician for written documentation of what was inspected, what was found, and what was done. Ask your insurer, in writing, whether a water heater replacement is covered under your policy and what documentation they need. Keep all receipts.

When you are ready to get repair work quoted, ask the contractor for an itemized quote that lists what comes out, how the space is dried, and what goes back in its place.

Q7

Can I turn the breakers back on myself after a flood in Barrhaven?

The short answer is no. The Electrical Safety Authority states that if water in your basement has risen above the electrical outlets, baseboard heaters, furnace or electrical panel, you should not enter the basement at all until the local electric utility has disconnected the power. Turning the breakers back on yourself is not the next step even after the water is gone.

The ESA is direct on this point: do not attempt repairs yourself. Hire a Licensed Electrical Contractor to check your home's electrical system. The LEC files a notification with the ESA, and the ESA then tells the utility when it is safe to reconnect. Ask the LEC for a copy of the ESA Certificate of Acceptance when the work is done; you will want that for your records and for your insurer.

One thing worth knowing: the ESA's guidance is that allowing equipment and wiring to dry out and then reenergizing it is not a recommended practice. The fact that everything looks dry is not a basis for switching the power back on. ESA's water-damage guideline, revised May 1, 2025, marks submerged residential panelboards and wiring devices for replacement, and says that in many cases replacement is the only safe alternative even if no visible damage is apparent.

If you are tempted to do the work yourself: under Ontario law homeowners may do electrical work in their own home, but they must meet the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, including filing the required notifications, and ESA's flood page says that attempting repairs yourself could delay your power being reconnected and affect insurance claims.

Your next call after the LEC is your insurer: get a written answer on whether the cost of the LEC inspection and any electrical repairs are covered under your policy, and whether the ESA Certificate of Acceptance is a document they need before they will settle that part of your claim.

Q8

Are big drying fans safe near a gas furnace in Nepean?

Drying fans near a gas furnace raise a specific concern that the TSSA has flagged: high-volume fans can create negative pressure in a basement, which may allow carbon monoxide from household appliances to re-enter the living space. TSSA says to ensure proper ventilation during drying.

The City of Ottawa says that after your home is flooded, a certified gas technician must turn your gas service back on. Your gas utility says not to relight appliances yourself and to have a licensed technician inspect any water-damaged equipment.

Health Canada adds one more step for the drying-out period: make sure there is a working carbon monoxide detector in the home whenever drying equipment is running.

A few things to have in writing before drying work begins:

- The licensed technician's findings on any water-damaged gas equipment.
- Confirmation that a working carbon monoxide detector is in place.

Drying still matters: Health Canada says a house and its furnishings are less likely to grow mould if they are dried within 48 hours, so the goal is to dry the space with proper ventilation, not to skip the fans. TSSA also says never to use fuel-burning appliances indoors that are designed for outdoor use only, such as portable fuel-fired generators. The Electrical Safety Authority's flood guidance also notes that allowing equipment to dry out and then re-energising it is not a recommended practice.

Before you agree to a scope of work with a flood repair contractor, ask them directly how they plan to manage ventilation and carbon monoxide risk while drying equipment is running in a space that contains gas appliances.

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.