

# HISTORIC PROPERTY REFERENCE GUIDE

## FLOOD & DISASTER RELATED RESOURCES



PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

The City of Houston's Historic Preservation Office is here to guide our historic property owners through the next steps after a natural disaster. If your building was affected by Hurricane Harvey, we have prepared this quick reference guide with contacts and repair tips to help you safely and quickly restore your building.

Most repairs to buildings in historic districts and designated landmarks will not require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), although a building permit may be required. Please see below for a list indicating whether many common types of maintenance and repair require a COA.

To ensure your work complies with all city regulations, we recommend that you contact city staff prior to starting work.

### CONTACTS

*Houston Historic Preservation Office (HPO):* 832-393-6556; [historicpreservation@houstontx.gov](mailto:historicpreservation@houstontx.gov)

- Contact us if you have any questions about whether your repairs require review from our office.

*Houston Permitting Center:* 832-394-9000; <https://www.houstonpermittingcenter.org/>

- Check to see if your repair requires a permit.

*FEMA:* <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4332>

- Learn about applying for assistance, cleaning tips and other resources.  
<https://www.fema.gov/nfip-file-your-claim>
- Learn how to file a flood claim.

*Texas Historical Commission Disaster Resources:* <http://www.thc.texas.gov/news-events/disaster-resources>

- Learn about how to repair and rehabilitate historic buildings after the flood as well as what financial assistance you may qualify for. Tax incentives may also be available to you. For other questions, you may contact THC directly at 512-463-6100, or [thc@thc.texas.gov](mailto:thc@thc.texas.gov).

### REPAIRS THAT ***DO NOT*** REQUIRE A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS\*

\*note that these repairs MAY require a permit.

- Ordinary maintenance and repair: This can include cleaning the exterior of your building or replacing broken window glass;
- Removal and cleaning of interior finishes and drywall damaged by flood waters (DO NOT remove internal shiplap without first speaking to HPO staff);
- Removal and cleaning of mold;
- Painting exterior wood surfaces, and repainting previously painted masonry surfaces;
- Reroofing with in-kind materials with no change to the roof structure;
- HVAC, mechanical, electrical or plumbing work;
- Leveling of a foundation that does not raise or lower the whole foundation;
- Installation or repair of gutters, downspouts, storm windows and doors, window screens, screen doors, temporary emergency weatherization features such as plywood coverings over windows, porch ceiling fans, light fixtures, landscaping;
- Repair and installation of fences;
- Removal or repair of burglar bars, satellite dishes, antennae, solar panels, free-standing signs, and accessibility ramps and lifts;
- Demolition of a *noncontributing* structure;



### REPAIRS THAT WILL LIKELY REQUIRE A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

- Replacement of exterior materials such as siding, windows, and doors etc.  
If you need to replace material, please follow these steps:
  1. Take photos of the affected areas and label them with descriptions of the damage
  2. Email the photos with your property address, name and phone number to our historic staff at [historicpreservation@houstontx.gov](mailto:historicpreservation@houstontx.gov) to determine if whether a COA is required.
  3. If staff determines you need a COA, we will walk you through the application process. Please see our Historic Preservation Web Manual for more information:  
<http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/HistoricPreservationManual/index.html>

Again, we urge you to contact our office to discuss your specific repair needs.

### TIPS FOR DRYING OUT YOUR BUILDING

- *Internal wall coverings:* Some are more resistant to flooding than others. For example, gypsum (sheetrock) is very porous and holds water easily, therefore it should be removed. FEMA suggests if the water line was below 4', remove the bottom 4' of wallboard. If the water line was above 4', remove all the wallboard. Other finishes like concrete and plaster are less porous and therefore more resistant to water penetration; these can usually be cleaned and dried out slowly.
- *Wood framing:* Slow and steady is key: many historic buildings are wood framed, so after removing or draining the water source, it is essential to let the wood dry out slowly with ventilation, dehumidifiers and fans as opposed to using a heater for a quick dry. This reduces the risk of the wood warping and blistering which could cause structural damage.
- *Wood flooring:* This can be a hard-finish on the surface but beneath is often unfinished and susceptible to swelling from water intake that should be dried out slowly. This can lead to individual boards warping as they dry but some pieces may be salvageable by sanding it flat or re-nailing the pieces. Hardwoods should also be cleaned thoroughly, however, consult with a specialist if you are thinking about replacement. It is essential to remove any trapped water underneath the floor boards.
- *Insulation:* Foam insulation is the most resilient, it may only need to be hosed off but always consult with a professional; fiberglass batts hold water easily and should be replaced; and cellulose can hold water for a long time and can lose its anti-fungal and fire retardant abilities and should be replaced.
- *Mold:* Mold mitigation is key after a flood. Be sure to remove all water sources and open your walls by removing or poking holes in the sheetrock. Clean with a disinfectant and consider a fungicide treatment.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Red Cross, ["Repairing Your Flooded Home"](#)
- US National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, ["After the Flood: Emergency Stabilization and Conservation Measures"](#)
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, ["Treatment of Flood-Damaged Older and Historic Buildings"](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency, [Mold removal](#)
- Louisiana State University, ["Storm Recovery Guide"](#)
- Galveston Historical Foundation, ["DIY Heirloom Recovery"](#)
- Houston Chronicle, [Drying out and salvaging flood-damaged possessions](#)