

# News



New Jersey  
**Office of the Attorney General**

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY

Peter C. Harvey, Attorney General



DIVISION OF

## New Jersey State Police

Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Public Information Office (609) 265-0172

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## Hydrostatic Pressure Can Collapse Walls

Mount Holly, NJ -- Residents who return to flooded homes are urged to exercise care when pumping basement water.

Pressure from water-saturated ground outside the structure, and from basement water inside, balance each other and keep the foundation walls stable. If basement water is abruptly drained, the walls can collapse. People who have only minimal damage to their property could inadvertently destroy their homes if they do not follow proper procedures.

The best time to begin the pumping process is when floodwater is no longer covering the ground. If a basement has standing water, it is critical that all electricity be turned off before entering. Never use gasoline-powered pumps or generators indoors because they create deadly carbon monoxide exhaust fumes.

The proper way to remove basement water is to drain it slowly and carefully. **Here is the best procedure to follow:**

1. Pump the water level down one foot. Mark that level and wait overnight.
2. Check the water level the next day. If the water rose above the mark, it is still too early to drain the basement. Wait 24 hours and repeat the process.
3. When water stops rising above the first mark, pump down another 2-3 feet. Repeat the same overnight check procedures. Never reduce the water level by more than one foot per day. Although it is very tempting to drain your basement water as soon as possible, the results of pumping too quickly can cause severe structural damage. Also, residents who left sump pumps running in their homes to keep ahead of floodwaters could face the same devastating results.

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