

## Frequently Asked Questions about Flood-soiled Clothing

### **Q. Are there additional sanitizers that can be used for clothing?**

A. Quaternary compounds were recommended for sanitizing clothing articles which may be damaged by chlorine bleach. Roccal\* and Zephtrin\* were mentioned by brand name. Others that are available in Georgia include Spartan\* and Johnson.\* The best place to find these are in janitorial supply businesses. Chlorine bleach is still the most effective sanitizing agent, but as you know, may damage some fibers and cause color changes.

### **Q. How do you get rid of the odor left in clothes which have been disinfected?**

A. Some of the phenolic compounds have a characteristic odor, but usually does not remain on the fabrics. However if this is a problem, wash the garment a second time by itself in a full washer of water with the recommended amount of detergent for a full load. Use warm or hot water, if safe for the fabric, and hang to air dry.

### **Q. Should laundry equipment be sanitized?**

A. Yes, washers and dryers should be sanitized if they have been immersed with flood water. Caution is the first key. Never use a water-damaged appliance until it is thoroughly checked by a qualified service technician. Even after a flood, the hazard of electrical shock, fire, or explosion still exists for months or even years.

After your washer or dryer has been deemed safe to use, follow these recommendations:

- **Washer**  
Pour a disinfectant (ammonia, chlorine, pine oil, or phenolic) into the empty washing machine. Then complete a 15-minute cycle at the hot water setting.
- **Dryer**  
Step 1 — Unplug the dryer and wipe the drum with a cloth dipped in disinfectant solution. Be sure to wipe all areas of the drum and dryer door.  
Step 2 — Rinse with a cloth dipped in clean water.

- Step 3 — Leave the dryer door open until all parts are thoroughly dry. Taping wooden blocks to the door to hold it open will keep air circulating and reduce the potential danger to children who might crawl inside.  
Step 4 — When the drum is dry, plug in the dryer and resume normal use.

In addition to disinfecting the washer and dryer, be sure to sanitize clothes baskets and other surfaces with which clothing will come in contact.

**Q. How can heirloom textiles be disinfected?**

A. This is a tough one since the true sanitizing agent would be too harsh for these delicate fabrics. According to Sara Wolfe, with the Textile Museum at Georgetown University, a Phenolic/quaternary mixture such as Lysol\* Disinfectant spray or liquid concentrate will kill bacteria without damaging the fibers. The process would be to clean, then disinfect, then rinse once again.