



**For Immediate Release:**

**September 14, 2017**

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**Arlington, VA, September 14, 2017** – The Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA), the Air-Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Institute (AHRI), the Heating Air conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI) and the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) have released the following statement and guidelines for individuals affected by recent natural disasters.

As millions of citizens in the areas affected by hurricanes attempt to return to their daily lives, the national associations for professional HVAC contractors, distributors, manufacturers, and thermostat recyclers urge people to take extra cautions before restarting their air conditioning systems. The damage that flood waters have on air conditioning systems poses numerous risks that home and building owners can avoid by having their systems inspected by a professional contractor.

ACCA, AHRI, HARDI, and TRC advise that consumers follow the recommendations of industry professionals. The following recommendations should be observed to ensure that home and building owners who are dealing with floods and power outages are not risking their health and safety when turning their air conditioning systems on.

**Advice for consumers:**

- **Safeguard at-risk persons:**
  - If your neighborhood or building loses power, speak with your neighbors, especially the elderly, who may be at risk in a home with no air conditioning.
  - In hot and humid weather, the elderly are at great risk and need to be moved to a conditioned facility quickly.
- **For facilities that specialize in elderly care:**
  - If the air conditioning system is out of service, you should move elderly individuals to a conditioned environment immediately.
  - Do not restart the air conditioning in these facilities before speaking with a professional contractor.
- **Do NOT restart your air conditioning system if there has been flooding in your neighborhood or around your building:**
  - When flooding recedes, air conditioners may still contain water, silt, or other contaminants (including bacteria and fungi).
  - If someone restarts a system and it contains micro-organisms, they could be distributed through the duct system and affect indoor air quality.
  - If you restart your system and water penetrated the electrical components, then the system could burn out electrical components in the outdoor and/or indoor units.
- **Most often, equipment in flooded areas needs to be replaced:**
  - Any equipment that contains steel is prone to rusting.
  - Electrical components are prone to premature failure.
  - The risk of the bacteria and mold growth in equipment that contains residual water is very high.

- **Some air conditioning equipment may be able to be cleaned and restored:**
  - There is a nationally recognized ANSI standard for cleaning and restoring HVAC equipment that was written by the professional HVACR industry.
  - ACCA Standard 6 – Restoring the Cleanliness of HVAC Systems for Residential and Commercial HVAC Applications, is the minimum standard for the proper cleaning of HVAC systems in homes and buildings and is recommended by the national trade associations.
- **Concerning water heaters:**
  - Regardless of whether it uses gas, oil, or electricity, if it was exposed to flood water the unit should be replaced.
  - In gas and oil units, valves and controls can corrode. In an electric unit, the thermostat and controls can corrode.
  - In all types, the insulation surrounding the unit will likely be contaminated and will be nearly impossible to disinfect. In addition, the insulation takes a great deal of time to dry and can lead to corrosion of the tank from the outside.
  - Even if water heater components have been cleaned and the unit seems to operate properly, parts may corrode in the future. Both gas and electric water heaters have a pressure relief valve that can corrode and stick after being exposed to flood water.
  - A new water heater is a relatively small investment, and replacing it is fairly easy to do. If the water heater was more than five years old, the chances are good that a new unit will be more efficient, which will save the homeowner money in the long run.
- **Some equipment may also contain mercury, which when exposed to air may evaporate and become an odorless and toxic vapor:**
  - Do not discard any unknown system components before speaking with a professional contractor.
- **Homeowners should consult a licensed professional HVAC contractor before attempting to restart their cooling system:**
  - [www.acca.org/locator](http://www.acca.org/locator)
  - <http://hvacradvice.com/site/1/Home>.

As the leading organizations representing the heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration industry, we send our thoughts and prayers to the millions of individuals who are struggling to recover from these unprecedented storms. We offer our sincerest condolences to the families of those that have died and continue to praise the first responders who risk their lives for others.

For more information, please contact ACCA's Director of Industry and External Relations, Todd Washam at [todd.washam@acca.org](mailto:todd.washam@acca.org) or 703-824-8864.

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