

STRUCTURAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

Assessing potential hazards after a flood



- Return to your home **ONLY** when local authorities have advised that it is safe to do so.
- Do not cut or walk past caution tape that was placed over doors or windows to mark damaged areas or if a building inspector has placed a color-coded sign on your home.
- This site may be unsafe for children and pets, consider leaving them with a relative or friend while you conduct the first home-safety inspection of your home after the disaster.

Before entering your home, make a careful and thorough inspection of your home's structural elements:

- Check the outside of your home for **loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks, missing support beams**, or other damage. Damage on the outside can indicate a serious problem inside. If possible, have a building inspector check the structure before you enter.
- If the door is jammed, don't force it open – it may be providing support to the rest of your home.
- Smell for gas.** If you detect natural or propane gas, or hear a hissing noise, **leave the property immediately** and get far away from it. **Call the fire department** after you reach safety.
- If you have a propane tank system, **turn off all valves** and contact a propane supplier to check the system before using it again.
- Beware of animals, such as **rodents, snakes, spiders, and insects**, that may have entered your home. As you inspect your home, make loud tapping noises with a stick to give notice that you are there.
- Damaged objects, such as furniture or stairs, may be unstable. Be very cautious when moving near them. Avoid holding, pushing or leaning against damaged building parts.
- A **sagging ceiling** makes it heavy and dangerous. Avoid walking beneath it or striking the center of the damaged area as it may cause the whole ceiling to collapse.
- A **sagging floor** could collapse under your weight, so don't walk there!
- If the weather is dry, open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- If power is out, use a flashlight. **Do not use any open flame**, including candles, to inspect for damage or serve as alternate lighting.
- If you are using an energy generator, do not place it indoors as it may cause carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make temporary repairs such as covering holes, bracing walls, and removing debris. Save all receipts. Take photographs of the damage. You may need these to substantiate insurance claims later.

Call Austin 311 to request a home safety inspection
Call 911 in case of life-threatening emergency