

FLOOD or WATER AFFECTED HISTORIC VEHICLES, TRACTORS AND ANTIQUE MACHINERY

Please pass this on to anyone you know who has had vehicles affected by floods. This article is **COPYRIGHT FREE under Attribution- NonCommercial 4.0 International** providing you acknowledge the Council of Heritage Motor Clubs as the source. v.2.0 October 22 2022

CHMC has gathered some information and resources that may assist enthusiasts who have flood or water affected historic vehicles, tractors or machinery. This is a huge topic and there are many opinions and experiences out there regarding flood or water damaged vehicles. This document is just a starter to help you focus your thoughts.

Safety first

- Before approaching and inspecting your vehicle, etc. **assess all hazards in and around it** and manage those hazards before doing anything.
- Don't put yourself at risk of harm. Flood water can hide many dangers.
- Make sure **electricity** supply to the flooded area/s **is off**.
- When it's safe to do so, **take photographs and record what you do**, e.g. clearing debris.
- When inspecting, handling and moving items **wear protective clothing**, footwear, goggles, gloves **and mask** – *mould is not friendly and it moves in quickly on flooded carpet, upholstery, foam rubber and insulation.*

At First sight

- A mud-covered, water-logged vehicle or historic tractor is a depressing sight BUT **you may be able to recover the whole or something**.
- As a vehicle or antique machinery restorer you know that amazing things can be done to restore or replicate severely damaged items.
- **Look past the mess**, you need to be **very rational and realistic** at this stage and consider carefully what can be recovered. Try not to make snap decisions to throw away.

Insurance

Before attempting to clean or move your vehicle or machinery check with your insurers as to what they want you to do. Contacting them may be difficult during a flood disaster but you should make every effort to obtain and follow their instructions.

Consider

- **Keep or throw away?** The overwhelming first responses to disasters are to ASAP tidy up and throw away debris. Sadly, later people some realise that there were recovery alternatives for "things" they disposed of.
- Whole vehicles might be **unsalvageable BUT** items off those vehicles may be later usable.
- **Pause for a second thought** before disposing permanently of anything, consider can you resurrect the vehicle or parts? Consider will you accept an insurance payout, or do you keep the vehicle and restore it?

Next moves

- **Disconnect the battery.**
- **Remove manuals, photos and documents** in the vehicle or stored with it, these should be attended to ASAP as they can probably be saved or stabilised for later copying if not too long under water – see <https://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/resources/flood-recovery/>
- **Don't try to start the vehicle yet.** Water may be in the engine, transmission or fuel system – you'll do more damage.
- If you can **safely**, and if it is OK with your insurer, **move the vehicle** to a place where work can start on stabilising the damage. Putting the vehicle or machine in the sun to dry it out as quickly as possible helps lessen mould.
- **Mould and corrosion will have already begun**, **clean out water and mud and dry** out your vehicle as soon as possible. A wet-dry vac and a pressure cleaner are useful, as can a hand-held yard blower for drying.

How far did the water penetrate? These checks will give you a better idea of what the future is for your historic vehicle, tractor or antique machinery.

- **How high did the water get?** Look for a water mark so you'll know it was totally inundated or not. If your vehicle or machine was completely submerged, a full restoration may be required.
- **Check the dipsticks** for the engine, transmission, etc. If there's water droplets there then you've got to at least do draining and oil changes.
- **Check the fuel** - drain the petrol tank. Check the fuel lines, carby and petrol vac tanks for water. Don't forget water may have disintegrated paper-based gaskets.
- **Check how far past seals** like crankshaft, transmission and axle seals water may have penetrated, especially if the vehicle or machine sat in water for a few days or more.

Some early actions you might take (Be mindful of your insurer's requirements)

- **Drain** engine and gearbox etc., if possible, remove the oil pan and engine covers. Get everything dried out as soon as possible. Fill up with new oil etc.
- **Remove** the exhaust system entirely and stand up all the components so that they can drain and dry out.
- **Remove** lenses and drain all light buckets
- Perhaps remove the dash and instruments to clean and to dry
- Remove and dry door linings, seats, carpets etc.
- If the vehicle will be waiting a while for attention, consider what should you do to protect it or safely store it from further damage? Make the site or vehicle weathertight, if possible.

Getting the engine going again. There's a lot of information on the internet that goes into detail for returning all the components of a water damaged vehicle, tractor or antique machinery to service. And plenty more about what you should do **before starting an engine** after it's been waterlogged. If you intend to do this work yourself that information may prove invaluable. If you live in a flood prone area there's bound to be club members who've done this before – it's really worth talking to them.

Is my vehicle or antique machinery restorable? If insured, this is a discussion with your insurer, if you have a "right to the wreck" option or are uninsured, then you should consider:

- How serious are the effects of the flood or water damage on the vehicle?
- Are critical replacement parts available?
- Your ability and desire to restore the vehicle.
- Rarity and/or desirability of the vehicle.
- Your personal attachment and other emotional and/or community or wider ties (local, hobby or heritage significance) that the vehicle or machinery has.

If you feel unsure then talk with experienced restorers in your club and get their insights.

When restoring a flood or water damaged vehicle

- Ensure you're **aware of any legal matters** that might affect whether or not the vehicle can be repaired and registered.
- Ensure that the vehicle or its components that will be re-used will really be **safe and operable** once repaired/restored.
- Ensure that if it has been **written-off** you can register the vehicle once it is thoroughly restored. <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/registration/get-nsw-registration/written-off.html>

A reminder for us all:

Keep your vehicle etc. **insurance policies up to date** and **take good photos of your vehicles, antique machinery etc. and keep copies offsite** - digital and/or hard copy.

The above information is provided merely for your consideration. While care has been taken in the creation of this information, we do not warrant, represent or guarantee that the material published in the article Flood or Water Affected Historic Vehicles, Tractors and Antique Machinery is in all respects accurate, complete and current. To the extent permitted by law, we exclude any liability, including any liability for negligence, for any loss or damage arising from reliance on this information.

Council of Heritage Motor Clubs NSW Inc. <http://www.heritagemotoringcouncil.org.au/>

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NEXT PAGE - SOME USEFUL WEBSITES – Saving vehicles, machinery and manuals

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES – Saving vehicles, machinery and manuals

- **Post flood car cleaning** <http://www.bigberts.com/diy-post-flood-car-cleaning-recovery/>
- **Reconditioning Flood-Damaged Tractors** <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/reconditioning-flood-damaged-tractors>
- **What happens if my car is damaged by flooding?** <https://www.autoquru.com.au/car-advice/articles/what-happens-if-my-car-is-damaged-by-flooding>
- **Is it worth it to repair a classic car that was flooded?** <https://www.quora.com/Is-it-worth-it-to-repair-a-classic-car-that-was-flooded>
- **Cars Retrieved from floods – Is there hope?**
<http://www.secondchancegarage.com/public/650.cfm>
- **Controlling water damage could save your classic in the wake of a disaster**
<https://www.hagerty.com/media/maintenance-and-tech/controlling-water-damage-car-repair/>
- **Reconditioning Flood-Damaged Farm Equipment**
<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/reconditioning-flood-damaged-farm-equipment>
- Though it's written for heavy earthmoving equipment MECHTRONIK 16-Jan-2011 has listed some **really sensible sounding steps to take that could apply for pretty much all types of machines** after floods (minus the computer bits for the old ones of course)
<https://www.hotfrog.com.au/company/1072222637731840/article/1307741991022592>
- **Rescue Your Lawnmower or Other Small Engine After the Flood**
https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/family_home/hazards_and_threats/recovery_assistance/cleaning_up/landscaping/rescue-your-lawnmower-or-other-small-engine-after-the-flood
- **Save That Stuff, Part I: How to clean your tools after a hurricane**
<https://www.hagerty.com/media/maintenance-and-tech/cleaning-your-tools/>

For manuals, documents, photos etc.:

- **Flood Recovery** <https://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/resources/flood-recovery/>
- **Save Your Treasures the Right Way Follow these steps to halt further damage**
<https://aiccm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Save-Your-Treasures-the-Right-Way-2014.pdf>
- **How can you salvage precious belongings?** After a flood. A summary of methods and considerations for retrieving and salvaging items after a flood.
<http://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/81212-National-Preservation-Brochure.pdf>
- **Flood** Includes a video on salvaging water damaged books, and a list of resources about recovering flood damaged collections. <https://aiccm.org.au/disaster/flood/>
- **Recovering flood-damaged records** Steps to recover water damaged materials.
<https://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/storing-and-preserving-information/preserving-information/recovering-flood-damaged-records>
- **First aid for water damage** Recovery of water damaged film and magnetic tape.
<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/preservation/guide/home/first-aid-water>
- **Recovery Checklist** Steps to recover records from disasters, especially those involving fire and water. Esp. useful about ½ way down the webpage.
<https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/advice/disaster-management/recovery-chcklist>
- **Salvaging damaged collections** Practical Videos and more on recovering water and flood damaged materials. <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/how-do-i/preserve-my-collection/salvaging-damaged-collections>

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