

## WATER AFFECTED OR FLOOD DAMAGED HISTORIC VEHICLES 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.

CHMC has gathered some suggestions and resources that may assist enthusiasts who have flood affected or water damaged historic vehicles. This is a huge topic and there are many opinions and experiences out there with flood or water damaged vehicles. This document is just a starter to help you focus your thought if you have such a vehicle.

### At First sight

- A mud covered, water logged vehicle is a depressing sight BUT **you may be able to recover the whole or something**. As vehicle or antique machinery restorers you know that amazing things can sometimes be done with or replicated from severely damaged items.
- **Look past the mess**, you need to be very rational and realistic at this stage and consider what can be recovered.

### Safety first

- Before looking closer assess hazards in and around vehicle and manage those hazards appropriately before doing anything. Flood water is filthy and can hide dangers.
- 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.*

### Consider

- 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 should you accept the insurance payout and use the money to purchase another classic, or buy back the salvaged vehicle and restore it?
- **Keep or throw away?** The overwhelming natural first responses to disasters are to ASAP tidy up and throw away. Sadly, later some realise that there were recovery alternatives for “things” they disposed of.

### Next moves

- **Remove Manuals, photos and documents** with the vehicle should be attended to ASAP as they can probably be saved with minimal effort if not too long under water – see <https://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/resources/flood-recovery/>
- **Disconnect the battery**
- **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** or have to for the next steps, **tow the vehicle** to a place where you can start working 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 or antique machine.

- **How high did the water get?** Look for a water mark if you know it was not totally inundated, if you know where the water got to it might save you some cleaning. 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 oil changes and at worst - a whole lot more to consider.
- **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 sat in water for a few days or more.

**Some early actions you might take** (But **be mindful of your insurer's** requirements and intentions)

- Drain engine and gearbox etc., if possible remove the oil pan and engine covers. Get everything dried out as soon as possible. Fill back 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 light buckets
- Perhaps remove the dash and instruments or clean and to dry
- Remove and perhaps dry door linings, seats, carpets etc.
- If the car will be waiting a while, what should you do to protect it or store it?

**Getting the engine etc. going again.** There's a lot of information on the internet that goes in good detail for returning all the components of a water damaged vehicle, tractor or antique machinery to good service. And plenty 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 restorable?** This is likely to be a discussion with your insurer, but if uninsured or you have a "right to the wreck" option, then you should consider –

- How serious are the effects of the flood or water damage on the vehicle?
- Availability of critical replacement parts
- Depth of your pockets *after* the insurance payout
- 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 has.

If you feel unsure about making these decisions talk with experienced restorers in your club, 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.
- Ensure that the vehicle or its components that will be 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>

**Finally, 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 Water Damaged Historic Vehicles 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.**

March 26 2021

<http://www.heritagemotoringcouncil.org.au/>



**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.autoguru.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](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.:**

- **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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