

CONTENTS SOLUTIONS

THE GO-TO-GUIDE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY RESTORATION

Vol.14, Issue 9

HOARDERS?

Adjusters Need The Contents Pros – Stat!

**NO JOB TOO BIG
FOR THE
CONTENTS TEAM!**

THIS DOG'S NOSE KNOWS!

Provided by your Contents Restoration partner

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**24 HOUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL**

WATER/SMOKE DAMAGE? HOARDERS? ADJUSTERS NEED CONTENTS PROS – STAT!



Contents experts who accept water, fire or smoke jobs that involve a “hoarder” are well trained – it’s just that simple. Some homeowners and novice insurance personnel make the mistake of hiring one of those, “Two fellas and a truck” outfits that are little more than trash collectors.

For a hoarder they are a worst nightmare. Each item (even stacks of newspaper and empty bottles) can have the same emotional significance for them that precious jewels and heirlooms hold for us.

The “Two fellas and a truck,” can become a nightmare for the adjuster as well. They move through a home like a whirlwind, stuffing bags and boxes with anything and everything. They have trucks and dumpsters standing by to haul it all away and they have little or no training toward how to differentiate between valuables and the detritus of a human packrat.

In some cases they can get away with it, but, as we have mentioned in previous articles about this topic, it is quite common for the homeowner to ask things like, “Where are the jewelry boxes from the master bedroom – the ones listed on my insurance policy?” only to discover that they have been swept away with Mardi Gras beads and stacks of broken toys, newspapers and VHS tapes.

Contents professionals look in every coat pocket, every shoe, every book, every box, every drawer, every bag, every folder and more – looking for cash, important records, bills, jewels and other valued items – before throwing things away.

In some cases items are chosen to be donated. Others to be thrown away, but no items are removed without the expressed permission of the owner.

Equally important, a contents job manager may give an estimate on a room he (she) has not yet entered because the doorway is so full of debris, but he will also point out to the adjuster that there may be a revision based on what is discovered when the first layers of litter are removed.

Disposal companies don’t need to make such distinctions because (to them) most of the items in their path are already earmarked for the city dump.

Contents restoration companies take pictures of the rooms, the major items, things that will be donated, discarded or restored – in point of fact, they create a visual “running inventory” that may be seen at any time by the insurance representative, the owner, any legal representation, etc. This makes things much easier for the adjuster to proceed in a timely (and safe manner).

More recently, there is a whole new protocol for “hoarding house” safety. Workers are often seen in full protective suits, shoe coverings, masks and gloves. In spite of all this protection, one job manager contracted a form of the Hantavirus and dozens have reported infestations of bed bugs (one worker jokingly announced that the fastest way to test for bedbugs in a cluttered room was to have her walk in first!)

Jobs where hoarding is involved are no place for those with no training – they are best left to contents professionals with a specialty in restoring not discarding.

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF VOLATILE CHEMICALS

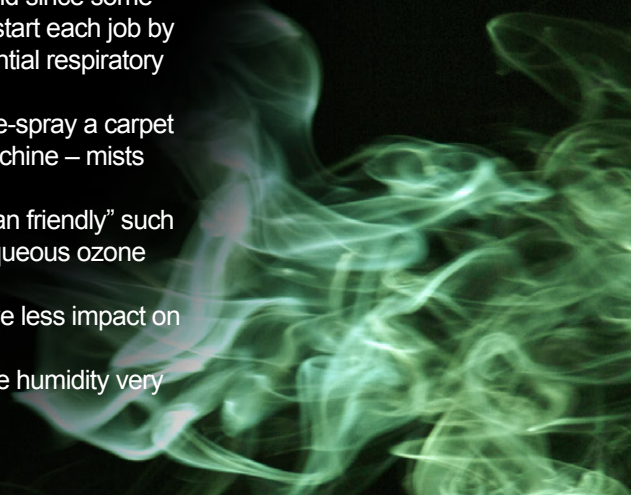
Contents professionals are often called upon to clean carpets and upholstery. And since some of the cleaning agents can be harmful to those with respiratory challenges, the pros start each job by asking the clients whether there are infants, children, the elderly or anyone with potential respiratory problems.

If such challenges are an issue in the home or office, the contents team don’t pre-spray a carpet or couch, they mix the water and cleaning compounds in the tank of the cleaning machine – mists can make it difficult for some people to breathe.

Contents professionals are constantly on the lookout for solutions that are “human friendly” such as those that are created from the herbal essence thyme, or electrolyzed water or aqueous ozone that changes to ordinary water only minutes after it is applied.

Regardless, they use compounds that are less irritating and are designed to have less impact on people and the environment.

And they will use cool or warm water wherever possible – hot water can raise the humidity very quickly and can adversely affect those with breathing distress.





IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A DOG

"Labrador Retriever portrait" by Herwig Kavallar in Wikimedia

We've heard of mold-sniffing dogs. We've even heard of "cadaver dogs" (that find dead bodies). And, most recently, we've seen articles about remarkable dogs who can sense cancer cells inside a human, even when modern medical tests had failed to detect them.

But now they have – bedbug sniffing dogs! In previous issues we have discussed the fact that contents pros have a protocol that is remarkably effective against the small, blood-sucking insects (although many companies still don't want the job!) And now they have a new fur-coated ally.

Various breeds have been trained for the job and many of them are put through their paces by sealing live bedbugs in a glass jar and having the dogs hunt them down in a typical home or apartment.

Some co-op boards in New York have complained about "false positives." A trained dog will sniff around in a room and give the affirmative sign that, by golly, there are bedbugs right there! But when an exterminator comes, he can't

find any bedbug signs at all.

The dogs' trainers are quick to point out that the dogs are so good that they can smell bedbug fragrance on someone who has been in a place where there were bedbugs and brought the fragrance home with them. Or, the bedbug smell can come wafting through a shared ventilator in an apartment building from a home two floors away!

Trainers also insist that you can't fool the dog, but you can fool their handlers. If a handler isn't well educated, (s)he will confuse the dog (who thinks it is all a game anyway) and it will respond to their inaccurate cues.

One contractor in Kentucky tells us that he keeps his bedbug sniffing dog in top form by taking it around to friend's and relative's homes two or three times a week to perform practice searches.

Contents teams don't look forward to tangling with bedbugs no matter who is helping out – but they have proven to be among the best deterrents in the field.

CARPET MATS MAKE SENSE AND CENTS

Most restoration companies and virtually all contents divisions put down mats as they enter a home or office. Some think it is simply good public relations. But, according to a recent press release a study conducted by the ISSA/INTERCLEAN® "The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association," when someone walks into a home or office it can cost 72 cents.

"According to the study, if 1,000 people per day enter a building over a 20 day period where no matting is installed, they will track in about 24 pounds of soil. It costs, according to the study, about \$600 to remove one pound of soil, which amounts to a staggering \$14,400 just in this 20-day time period."

Of course 1000 people won't be walking into the average home in a given 20-day period, but imagine 10 workers entering and exiting with equipment, discarding damaged drywall, packing out furniture, boxes and individual valued items, etc.

"Breaking this down further," says Adam Strizzi, marketing manager for Crown Mats and Matting, "over a 20 day period, this amounts to \$720 per day and when we divide that by the 1,000 people entering the facility, it comes to 72 cents per person."

But, "The American Institute of Architects reports that five feet of matting will capture 33 percent of walked-in debris; 10 feet will capture 52 percent; and 20 to 25 feet can capture as much as 100 percent of soil on a building user's shoe bottoms, preventing the soil from entering the facility."

So putting down mats before they begin a job helps contents pros make sense and save cents!

NO JOB TOO BIG

Often contents teams are thought of as dealing with small clean-up jobs – packing dishes, cleaning smoke impregnated blankets, getting soot off walls, etc.

But contents pros have been also known to transport and clean thousands of pounds of electronics, entire collections of university documents and even clean and sanitize entire factories!

Not long ago, the contents professionals in one state had to drive skid steers (think of tractors with scoops in front) to remove mud two feet deep from a car lot that had been flooded – cars were swept into a nearby creek and could not be saved.

Then they brought in power washers to blast away the grime.

We still have not seen a job too big for an innovative contents crew.



Image from Mark Schellhase in Wikipedia

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and more!

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