
AFTERMATH

Damage Assessment: Contact insurance representatives and a conservator about an on-site evaluation before taking any action.

Stabilization:

- Once authorized to enter your home or building, reduce temperature and relative humidity at once to prevent a mold outbreak. Ideal targets are less than 70 degrees Fahrenheit and 45% relative humidity.
- If warm outside, use coldest air conditioning setting; cover broken windows with plastic.
- In cool, low-humidity weather, open windows, use circulating fans unless mold is already present.
- Turn heat on for human comfort only.
- Remove standing water, wet carpet, and furnishings. Empty items containing water.
- If everything is soaked, use commercial dehumidification except in historic buildings.

Documentation: Photograph or videotape conditions of collections and structure. Make sure images clearly record damage, or reshoot. Make visual, written and voice records for each step of salvage procedures.

Salvage Priorities: Focus initial protection efforts and salvage work on:

- Collections that are unique, most used, most vital for research, least replaceable or most valuable.
- Items most prone to additional damage if untreated.
- Materials most likely to be successfully salvaged.

Leave undamaged items in place unless the environment is unstable or not secure. If no part of the building is dry, protect all items with plastic sheeting. Retrieve or label all pieces of broken objects. Check items daily for mold. If mold is found, handle objects with extreme care and isolate them.

FRAMED ARTWORKS

Paintings:

- Remove from frames in a safe, dry place. Do **not** separate paintings from their stretchers.
- Keep wet painting horizontal and paint-side up with nothing on the surface. Avoid direct sunlight.

Art on Paper or Photos with Glass Fronts:

- If image sticks to glass, leave it in frame. Dry glass-side down. Otherwise, dry artwork slowly, image-side up with nothing touching the surface.

FURNITURE

Wood:

- Rinse or sponge surfaces gently to clean. Blot. Air dry slowly.
- If painted surfaces are blistered or flaking, air dry slowly without removing dirt or moisture.
- While drying, cover veneer with a protective layer and hold in place with weights or clamps.
- Finishes may develop a white haze, but this does not need immediate attention.

Upholstered:

- Rinse off mud.
- Remove cushions, lift-out seats and other pieces.
- Wrap upholstered materials in cloth to air dry. Replace damp cloths.
- Blot wood sections and air dry slowly.

BOOKS AND PAPER

Books:

- If rinsing is necessary, hold book closed.
- If partially wet, stand on top or bottom edge with covers opened to 90-degree angle, air dry.
- If very wet, lay flat on clean surface, interleave less than 20% of book with absorbent material. Replace interleaving when it becomes damp.
- If there are too many books to air dry within 48 hours, interleave with freezer or waxed paper, pack books spine-down in sturdy containers, and freeze.

Paper:

- Air dry flat as individual sheets or small piles up to ¼ inch tall. Interleave; replace damp interleaving.
- Do not unfold or separate individual, wet sheets.
- If there are too many items for air drying, interleave with freezer or waxed paper, pack papers or files supported and standing up in sturdy containers; pack containers only 90% full, and freeze.

TEXTILES

- Do **not** unfold or stack delicate wet fabrics.
- Rinse, drain, and blot items with clean towels or cotton sheets to remove excess water.
- Block and shape each damp item to original form.
- Air dry textiles indoors using air conditioning or fans.
- If items cannot be dried within 48 hours, separate them with freezer or waxed paper to prevent dye transfer, pack flat, freeze.

CERAMICS/METAL/STONE

Ceramics:

- If ceramic is broken, cracked or has mineral deposits or old repairs, place in clean, transparent polyethylene bag until a conservator can be consulted. Seal bag and monitor for mold.

Stone:

- If object is smooth-surfaced, blot gently and air dry.
- Do **not** blot if object is rough-surfaced or has applied finish. Air dry on plastic screen or clean towel.

Metal:

- Use gloves to handle.
- Rinse or sponge and blot metal object. Air dry.
- If object has applied finish, do **not** clean. Air dry; keep flaking surfaces horizontal.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Remove from plastic or paper enclosures or frames. Save all information about the photos.
- Carefully rinse with cool clean water as necessary.
- Do not blot or touch surfaces.
- Air dry – hang with clips on non-image areas, or lay flat on absorbent paper. Keep photos from contact with adjacent surfaces or each other.
- If there are too many for immediate attention, either keep photos (unless historic) in a container of clean water no more than 48 hours, then air dry, or freeze. If possible, interleave each photo with waxed or freezer paper.
- Do **not** freeze glass plate negatives.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Magnetic media:

- Wear gloves to avoid scratching surfaces.
- Do **not** use magnetized tools or scissors.
- When copying, clean drive heads frequently to protect equipment.

Tapes: Casing may keep tapes clean and dry.

However, if the tape itself is damaged:

- Disassemble case and remove tape.
- Rinse dirty tapes, still wound on reel, in clean lukewarm water.
- Support vertically on blotting material to air dry.
- Reassemble and copy.

Diskettes:

- Remove diskette from casing and bathe in clean distilled water.
- Dry with lint-free towels.
- Insert diskette into new casing and copy.

NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS

Collections may contain toxic materials, so use a respirator and protective clothing when handling.

Animal Study Skins/Taxidermy Mounts: Avoid direct handling. Air dry slowly or freeze.

Botanical Specimens:

- Rinse only if necessary. Interleave and air dry with herbarium sheets; use presses if necessary.
- Open specimen boxes and air dry slowly.

Fluid-Preserved Collections: Place specimens in sealed polyethylene boxes with a small amount of alcohol.

Geological Specimens: Rinse; air dry slowly.

Note: Some specimens should be dried quickly; consult a conservator.

Palaeontological Specimens:

- Rinse; air dry slowly.
- Fragile specimens and those with old repairs should be held together with ties during drying. Separate ties from specimens with waxed or freezer paper.

ORGANIC MATERIALS

Leather and Rawhide:

- Rinse or sponge with clear water to remove mud.
- Drain and blot to remove excess water.
- Pad with toweling or un-inked paper to maintain shape.
- Air dry. Manipulate tanned fur skins during drying to keep skins flexible.

Baskets:

- Rinse.
- Drain and blot to remove excess water.
- Stuff with clean paper towels to retain shape and absorb stains. Cover with clean towels. Air dry slowly.
- Change blotting material regularly.

Bone, Shell, and Ivory:

- Rinse.
 - Drain and blot to remove excess moisture.
 - Place on blotters on non-rusting screens. Air dry slowly.
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Charleston County Area, SC



Preparation and Preservation of Damaged Collections, Antiques and Other Valuables

GENERAL PREPARATION

- Move items away from windows and below-ground storage into water-resistant areas. If flooding is expected move items to higher floors, but avoid areas directly under a roof if hurricane conditions exist.
- Most valuables can be stored in water-tight plastic containers sealed with duct or other heavy-duty tape.
- Create a safe salvage area with locks, fans, tables, shelves, plastic sheeting, drying materials, and clean water.
- Verify financial amount and terms or insurance coverage.
- Compile a list of providers for generator, freezer, drying or freeze-drying services.

