

“411”

INFORMATION PLEASE...

Technical Data for Fire, Smoke and Water Damage

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Pack-Out/Move-Out

Severe losses as a result of damage from fire, smoke, water or biological contamination may necessitate the need for a “Pack-Out”. This service entails removing all the personal property from a home or business and transporting it to a secure location for processing, preservation, or security. Professional restoration companies will have the capability to provide this service.

A pack-out involves inventorying, notating pre-existing damage, wrapping, packing and transporting content items.

The items may be damaged by water, fire or smoke and will require some form of processing. In some cases, a pre-cleaning step is performed to neutralize the acidic residues from causing any further damages. In other cases, the items may simply need to be secured and protected while structural repairs are made to the home or building.

Items removed that require cleaning due to contaminants such as smoke or soil

should be processed as soon as practical. Items that are wet must be dried immediately in drying chambers so mold does not develop. The majority of secondary damage occurs to materials that are wet or damp and then stored. Items left damp or placed in humid conditions will develop internal damages and extensive surface mold forcing them to be discarded and replaced.

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The Pack-Out, Move-Out scenario is one of the most vital functions performed by a restoration professional. For all intents and purposes, restorers have now become professional moving companies. Actually, restorers have to be better and more meticulous than professional movers. Customers who must undergo this experience are already traumatized over the loss that has occurred to them. Under normal conditions, when

people voluntarily decide to move from one location to another, they have time to plan and acclimate to this transition. Customers, however, that have had their roofs blown off or their home or building subjected to water or fire damage are in a much different state of mind. They realize that everything they own has to be packed up and hauled away. Often they may not see their personal property for weeks, especially if repairs are extensive.

Once assigned the task of a pack-out, a professional restoration firm will properly start the process from the beginning. All items are carefully analyzed as to proper description and condition by room. Small items are individually wrapped in white newsprint, properly boxed, labeled, and inventoried. The inventory process begins as each small content item is counted, inspected for pre-existing damage, wrapped, and packed in a secure container. In the kitchen, this includes forks, knives,

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Tupperware, saltshakers, pots and pans, glasses, dishes, etc. Failure to notate pre-existing damage is a lose-lose scenario for the company that returns broken or damaged personal property.

Large items such as wooden furniture or upholstery must be thoroughly investigated. Often technicians will use high intensity light to see all the scratches, tears and gouges that many customers are unaware exist. Customers may not know or may forget about the scratch on the table or the tear in the sofa until it is returned. Often an entire claim can go bad when finger pointing begins and statements like "it wasn't in that condition prior to the loss." Contractors in this case often have to pay for all damaged items if not properly noted on the inventory sheet. The sheet has condition and location symbols that help technicians identify pre-existing damage as to where and what type.

During the inspection process, a professional restoration firm will need to make

an educated decision on the potential of properly being able to restore an item to its "previous existing condition." These decisions are necessary to allow for decisions to be made concerning the replacement of the item verses restoring the item involved. The true professional does not want to waste monies on restoring damaged items at a cost that is higher than the replacement values.

This meticulous process may take more time than just throwing everything in the truck, but it keeps everyone feeling more secure as the claim is completed, and the now processed contents are returned to the owner. Customers who observe this process appreciate that their property is being handled carefully and with accountability. The customer will be asked to sign all inventory sheets if present, or if unavailable they can waive that right. The customer will receive a copy of every inventory sheet with noted pre-existing damage. All items will be carefully loaded and secured on a cov-

ered box truck utilizing pads and proper packing protocols. After processing, contents will be stored until repairs are completed, and the items can be returned. The process will be constantly monitored and customers will be informed of the status of their claim and any complications that arise during processing.

A restoration professional realizes that complaints that get back to the insurance company, whether justified or not, can jeopardize the relationship the firm has with the insurance company. Complaints can be minimized if not eliminated by careful, conscientious, professional, and trained technicians who take pride in performing their job well.

A professional restoration firm will make every effort to be in total control of the claim so that the entire process, including timely repairs, as well as the processing and return of the personal property is done as conveniently and expeditiously as possible.

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