CONTENTS SOLUTIONS

THE GO-TO-GUIDE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY RESTORATION

Vol. 10, Issue 8

MOLD ON SOFT GOODS TOO LATE? OR JUST IN TIME?

ORIENTAL RUGS Contents Pros Know How

DIRTY JOB? Call a Professional

Provided by your Contents Restoration partner

Midwest Restoration Services

Fire * Smoke * Water

1180 Douglas Rd., Batavia, IL. 60510

Ph. 630.761.8100

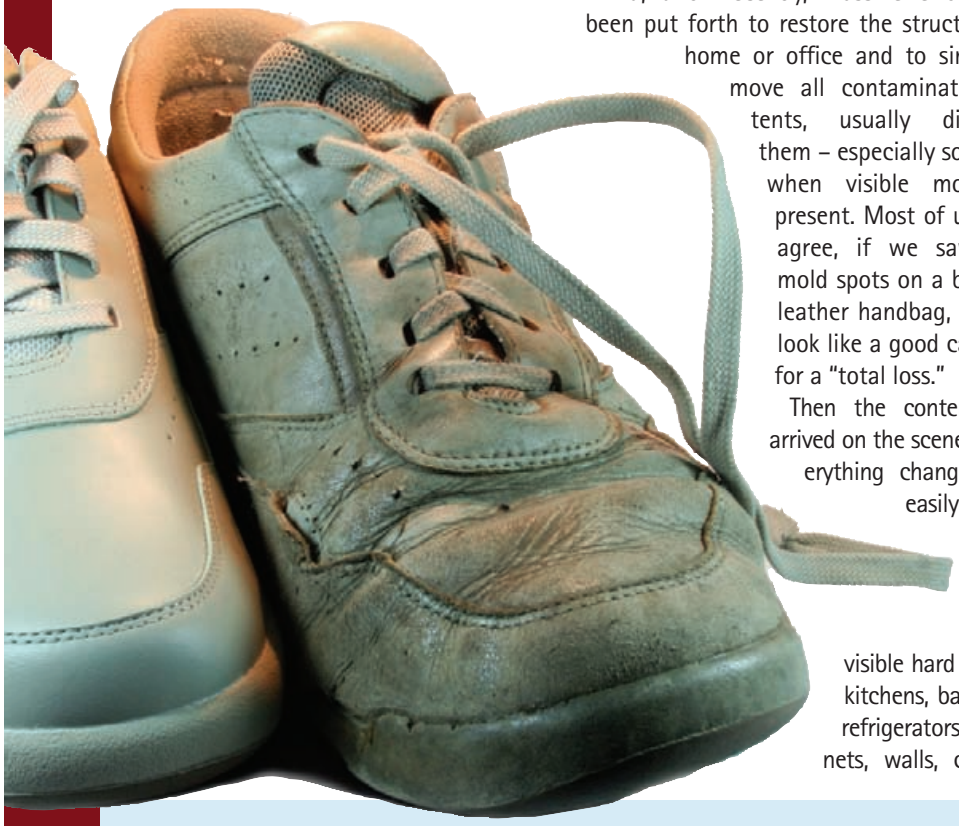
Soft Goods – Restored! Not Replaced.

You may have heard about the "Curse of the Mummy's Tomb," in which the early explorers and workers who entered the mystical vault were stricken by a mysterious illness that debilitated many of the team and actually killed others – the "Curse?" No, as it turns out, it was mold, plain old toxic spores of the same type with which restoration professionals and insurance companies have been dealing for generations.

Today the medical confraternity has attributed a wide range of symptoms to the ubiquitous toxins including runny noses, eye irritation, congestion, headaches, coughing up of blood, growths in the lungs and of course, aggravation of asthma. It is widely agreed that these symptoms are reactions to gases produced by the molds or to mold particles themselves.

Some mold losses are covered by insurance, some are not – but the contents pros know how to ask a carrier to get the answer.

And, until recently, massive efforts have been put forth to restore the structure of a home or office and to simply remove all contaminated contents, usually discarding them – especially soft goods when visible mold was present. Most of us would agree, if we saw black mold spots on a blouse or leather handbag, it would look like a good candidate for a "total loss."



Then the contents pros arrived on the scene and everything changed. They easily dealt with mold damage on visible hard surfaces, kitchens, bathrooms, refrigerators, cabinets, walls, counters, etc. But then something unexpected occurred – they started restoring soft goods as well.

Dresses, suits, handbags, sheets, blankets – even leather coats and shoes!

A couple of years ago, one company offered these figures:

Value of contents impacted	**$11.6 M**
Contents cashed out	**$2.7 M**
Value of cleaned contents	**$8.9 M**
Cost of cleaning	**$1.9 M**
Total savings	**$7.0 M**

That's $7,000,000 U.S. dollars saved in one year by restoring soft goods, (some were contaminated with mold, some were wet and some were covered in soot), instead of replacing them!

The insurance industry has become most interested in professionals who can do this and are deeply impressed by the new processes that enable them to perform such remarkable work.

But it doesn't stop there. Many of the techniques used to restore a leather coat can also be used to restore leather furniture. Those used to restore a moldy wedding dress can be used to restore black-spotted drapes.

The contents pros often used techniques that are largely ignored by the structural repair restorers because their focus, training and experience are in markedly different arenas.

When an insurance adjuster or property manager wants to save real money on any job where soft goods are threatened by mold (fire, flood, sewage, etc.) they look for a professional contents crew and when they find them, they invite them to work, job after job —now you know why!

Shriners Hospital and the Contents Pros

Do you remember Hurricane Ike? Shriners hospital in Galveston, Texas does. Nobody knew where the hurricane was going to hit, but Galveston was looking like it might be ground zero, so before it arrived the administrators at the hospital put in a call to the restoration company they knew and trusted.

That company called over 30 others and they deployed in strategic areas from Louisiana to the Texas coast. When the storm slammed into the hospital like an angry locomotive, with 110 mph winds and 20 foot water surge, they were already on the move.

By the following night they had pulled out the wet carpets, ruined sheetrock, mounds of sludge and other structural damage – the cleaning and drying process was under way before dawn.

Meanwhile their contents teams moved in. Ralph Semb, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, mentioned the 30 inches of water that had drowned the electronics, computers, fire alarm system, telephones – and the contents pros waited just long enough for the structural guys to drain the water.

"They were fantastic," said the chairman, "they came immediately once the call was made."

Like a well-trained military unit, they moved, cleaned and dried the furniture and fixtures.

The huge facility had been so hard hit that a total restructuring had to be enacted, from the wiring to the cafeteria counters.

By the second week in December, Shriners Hospital opened its doors and was back in business.

You Just Never Know

So, there we were, watching a professional contents team carefully, almost reverently, laying clean micro-fiber clothes on a damp Oriental rug, to keep the colors from bleeding, as they rolled it up for transport back to their cleaning facility. There it would be placed in an ultra-gentle "bath" to clean it and leach the soot, grime and smoke fragrance from it.

Two of the team prepared to move it; a third took measurements from the wall to the border and snapped quick pictures of its location and appearance. When they brought it back, the pattern would be placed in the same, exact conformation in which it had been when they first saw it.

The rug was dingy, dirty, with uneven colors and worn spots. The sort of thing you would pass up at a yard sale.

"Why are you taking so much time and care with such an old rug?"

"You just never know," one of them said, "they could be priceless."

He was right. In the 1500's, in Iran, two rugs were woven, one each for the burial chambers for two men of high status. As the next three hundred years passed, the rugs became worn, damaged and dingy. Finally, curators took one rug, dismantled its border and used the threads to repair the other.

Experts tell us that each of the carpets had about 34 million knots. And of course, the knots were all hand tied. Even today machines cannot match the intricate movements that created these masterpieces.

In 1893, the repaired carpet sold to a museum in London for the equivalent of what today would be about $2,000,000. The one without the border was sold to an American and is now one of the most prized pieces in a Los Angeles museum. There is no price on it—it is not for sale.

Of course you have heard about the sales at Christies auction house – one Oriental rug with lots of worn, colorless spots all over it, sold for over $158,000. Another, in better condition, but with obvious tears and holes, went for $170,500 (U.S. dollars).

And a third, with the color pretty much gone across its middle, the reds faded out and looking sort of "wrinkled," sold for $4,450,000.00.

So when the contents pros take a few extra minutes with something of which the price is unknown – it might just be priceless.

And maybe so are they! You just never know.

It's a Dirty Job, But…

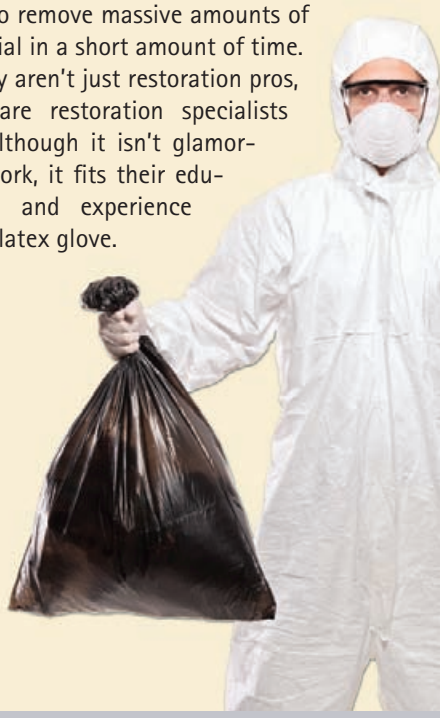
Restoration companies had not anticipated it, but real estate agents, insurance companies, facilities managers, banks and landlords have begun calling them and asking if their contents pros could help them restore the office buildings, apartments and houses for which they are responsible.

Compulsive hoarders, uncaring tenants or squatters will occasionally "trash" a place – literally. Spoiled food, human waste, odor, mildew, various proteins and mountains of garbage often make a place unlivable or unsellable.

Contents professionals are trained in decontamination, odor remediation and safely removing hazardous materials. They have top-of-the line tools, green cleaning agents and techniques that simply aren't available to untrained workers.

They routinely use hospital grade disinfectants which are known to kill 99% of most viruses and bacteria and they are experts at turning a disaster area into a living and working space. They have gone up against floods, fires, sewage back-up and they know how to remove massive amounts of material in a short amount of time.

They aren't just restoration pros, they are restoration specialists and although it isn't glamorous work, it fits their education and experience like a latex glove.



A Most Un-Civil Situation

You have probably heard or seen those American Civil War re-enactment societies. They are the performers who dress in authentic Civil War uniforms and put on mock battles for the public.

When one of the co-coordinators for such an event had an especially greasy fire, the contaminants coated the genuine artifacts like…well, like burned grease.

The two-hundred complete uniforms were ruined and no one, not the insurance company, not the owner, wanted to have to replace all of them, piece by antique piece. Fortunately, the adjuster knew a contents team who were fully equipped for such an eventuality. Ninety percent of the collection was cleaned and restored to pre-loss condition.

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