



TIPS FOR THE CARE OF WATER-DAMAGED FAMILY HEIRLOOMS & OTHER VALUABLES

Following a disaster, people often lose family heirlooms and other valuables to water-damage. The federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has obtained general information/recommendations from the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC) for homeowners regarding the recovery of water-damaged belongings.

Ten Tips for the Homeowner:

1. If the object is still wet, rinse with clear, clean water or a fine hose spray. Clean off dry silt and debris from your belongings with soft brushes or dab with damp cloths without grinding debris into objects.
2. Air dry objects indoors if possible. Sunlight and heat may dry certain materials too quickly, causing splits, warpage, and buckling.
3. The best way to inhibit growth of mold and mildew is to reduce humidity. Increase air flow with fans, open windows, air conditioners, and dehumidifiers.
4. Remove heavy deposits of mold growth from walls, baseboards, floors, and other household surfaces with commercially available disinfectants. Avoid the use of disinfectants on historic wallpapers.
5. If objects are broken or begin to fall apart, place all broken pieces, bits of veneer, and detached parts in clearly labeled open containers. Do not attempt to repair objects until completely dry, or, in the case of important materials, until you have consulted with a professional conservator.
6. Documents, books, photographs and works of art on paper may be extremely fragile when wet; use caution when handling. Free the edges of prints and paper objects in mats and frames, if possible. These should be allowed to air dry. Rinse mud off wet photographs with clear water, but do not touch surfaces. Sodden books and papers should also be air dried; or may be kept in a refrigerator or freezer until they can be treated by a professional conservator.

7. Textiles, leather, and other “organic” materials will also be severely affected by exposures to water and should be allowed to air dry.
8. Remove wet paintings from the frame, but not from the stretcher. Air dry, face up, away from direct sunlight.
9. Furniture finishes and painting surfaces may develop a white haze or bloom from contact with water and humidity. These problems do not require immediate attention. Consult a professional conservator for treatment.
10. Rinse metal objects exposed to floor waters, mud, or silt with clear water and dry immediately with a clean, soft cloth. Allow heavy mud deposits on large metal objects, such as sculpture, to dry. Caked mud can be removed later. Consult a professional conservator for further treatment.