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Summer Street - Act fast to restore documents after water damage - Part 1

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Coping with repairs or replacement of equipment and furnishings seriously damaged by water filtration or flooding is challenging enough for owners and managers of commercial businesses and offices. Yet, many overlook one of the greatest consequences - the potentially irreparable damage to documents.

Whether the documents are paper, books, files, medical records, electronic media or legal documents, any delay in the decision to dry the materials can result in permanent loss. Inks can break down, making the text illegible. Dirt and grime can penetrate the paper and pages can adhere. Mold and mildew will grow quickly on water-soaked documents.

That's why the key to a successful recovery of these materials is rapid response time. And, this response should be handled by a document restoration specialist.

An experienced provider will rapidly identify the best recovery method for a particular material, based on the value of the documents and the level of damage. For example, in the right circumstances, freezing documents can drastically reduce the time and cost of restoration. It also prevents the need for mold remediation, page separation and other, more expensive, corrective procedures.

Consider partnering with a provider that can assist in the clean-up of the disaster area and stabilize the indoor environment to reduce the moisture load to prevent the spoiling of unaffected documents. Following are the key phases of a document restoration project and the steps involved for a successful recovery.

The Recovery Process: The recovery process requires the technical expertise and equipment of a proven service provider. It's important that this restoration company is up-to-date with the most advanced techniques available, such as vacuum freeze drying, blast freezing, microbial disinfecting, deodorization, soot removal, and more. The recovery process to dry and clean documents begins with two initial steps:

- * **Freezing.** In order to halt deterioration, it is essential that documents be frozen as soon as possible. Usually, freezer-equipped truck trailers or freezer warehouses are used for this stage. The frozen materials can be stored until the professional drying procedure begins.

- * **Inventory and Sorting.** While the documents are frozen, decisions can be made regarding which to dry and clean and which to discard; work can begin to prune unwanted materials. Loose documents and files stored in cabinets are packed into boxes, labeled to identify contents.

The Drying Procedure: The second phase is the drying of the materials. Depending upon the type and extent of damage, and the materials, different treatments may be recommended. There are two primary methods used to dry documents - vacuum freeze-drying and desiccant drying.

Vacuum Freeze-Drying: A freeze drying process is the most efficient and effective method for the

drying of wet papers and other documents. Using accelerated vacuum freeze dry systems, Polygon technicians can restore water-damaged materials quickly and effectively, reducing back processing time by 20 to 30% compared to similar systems.

Part two will appear in the August 5th edition of NEREJ in the Owners Developers & Managers section.

Summer Street is document sector head with Polygon, Amesbury, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540