



FEMA

Disaster News

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ADEM: Tommy Jackson 501-683-6700

FEMA News Desk: 501-618-3400

SBA: Roger Busch 916-717-5807

TIPS FOR THE CARE OF FLOOD-DAMAGED FAMILY VALUABLES AND HEIRLOOMS

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The losses that come with disasters are usually measured in dollars. But often the losses that matter the most are the cherished items closest to individuals and families. What do you do about those invaluable possessions that have been damaged in a flood?

Restoration experts say family valuables and heirlooms can sometimes be saved after damage by floodwaters. With a little patience, prompt action and some professional tips, treasured photographs, letters and other irreplaceable objects may be salvaged from the flood.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has consulted with the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC) for recommendations on water-damaged belongings.

Top 10 Tips for Recovering Water-Damaged Valuables:

- If the object is still wet, rinse with clear, clean water or a fine spray. If dry, clean off silt and debris with a soft brush or dab lightly with a damp cloth.
- Air-dry wet or damp objects indoors if possible. Sunlight and heat may be too intense, causing splits, warping and buckling.
- Inhibit the growth of mold and mildew by reducing humidity. Increase airflow with fans, open windows, or air conditioners and dehumidifiers.
- Documents, books, photographs and works of art on paper may be extremely fragile when wet. Free the edges of prints and paper objects in mats and frames if possible, then air-dry. Soaked books and papers should be air-dried or kept in a refrigerator or freezer until a professional conservator can treat them. Please note, wet photographs and negatives stuck together should never be pulled apart. Soak them in clean water until they separate on their own. Rinse again in fresh clean water. Do not touch the wet surface. Dry on a clean, smooth surface.
- Textiles, leather and other organic materials will also be severely affected by exposure to water and should be allowed to air-dry.
- Remove wet paintings from the frame but not from the stretcher. Air-dry; face up, away from direct sunlight.
- 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.

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- Furniture finishes and painted surfaces may develop a white haze from contact with water and humidity. These problems do not require immediate attention. Consult a professional conservator for treatment.
- Remove heavy deposits of mold growth from walls, baseboards, floors and other household surfaces with commercially available disinfectants. Avoid using disinfectants on historic wallpapers.
- Rinse metal objects exposed to floodwaters, 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.

Because the information given is general, FEMA, AIC and NIC strongly recommend that professional conservators be consulted regarding the appropriate method of treatment for historic objects.

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The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) is the state's homeland security and emergency management agency. The agency works to identify and lessen the effects of emergencies, disasters and threats to Arkansas by developing effective prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery actions for all disasters and emergencies.

FEMA coordinates the Federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terrorism.

Editors: For more information on Arkansas disaster recovery, visit www.fema.gov or <http://www.adem.arkansas.gov/>.

Disaster recovery assistance is available to any individual without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status.