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THE GO-TO-GUIDE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY RESTORATION

Vol.12, Issue 10

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Vacuums Twice the Work or Half the Time?

Provided by your Contents Restoration partner



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The Case of the Colorless Carpet

Most restoration companies have someone on staff who knows how to repair carpets – every contents company does.

Surprisingly, quite a number of carpet repair companies will tell you that when a carpet has a “bleach stain” its color cannot be returned – the carpet itself must be replaced or “patched.”



But we have seen contents pros do both with equal success.

Actually, contents repair crews are quick to point out that a carpet marred by bleach is not stained so much as it is “discolored.” The color has been taken out not added to.

When contents pros replace a section of carpet it is common to find them looking in closets or if absolutely necessary, visiting carpet stores that are known for having swatches and remnants. Then, they cut a square or triangular shape around the stain and install the new piece in the same manner one might install carpet around a doorway or floor vent.

And if they color the bleached spot instead of replacing it, there are a few favorite ways to do so, but they always start by neutralizing the area where the bleach was spilled. There are lots of “neutralizing agents” available on the market – that part is easy.

Sometimes though, untrained beginners simply pour water on the area and blot up the excess – it never works out well. When bleach products dry they leave behind crystals. When you pour water on bleach crystals, you get (you guessed it) liquid bleach – the same thing that caused the bleached

carpet in the first place!

So the professional saturates the area with plenty of neutralizer and blots out the excess once it has done its work.

Next, some contents workers will use a “dye pen” or “marker” that releases dye into the bleached fibers.

Not many use that method. Most use a “dye kit” that has several colors from which the proper mixture of colors are chosen and extracted with an eye dropper then put in a heated container (sometimes a pan on a stove) at around 150 degrees Fahrenheit

They will normally start off with a mixture that is lighter than the color they are matching, then after testing it on the fabric they add a little more color to darken -- all a drop at a time.

The “trick” is to not let it get too dark – it is a whole lot easier to darken a little than to try to get the batch back to a lighter hue.

Then, using a dropper, they start in the center of the stain and put a few drops, work them in, add a few more drops and work the color out toward the edge of the stain.

Anyone can put color into a bleached carpet, with the proper tools – contents pros do it well.

Agents and Adjusters Like the “New Level of Clean”

Not long ago, on the “Rachel Ray” television show, researchers tested the sanitizing effectiveness of “liquefied ozone,” a new process that uses ordinary water that has been “electrolyzed” by running a mild electric current through it, producing an extra oxygen molecule and turning it into an effective germ and virus killer.

To perform the experiment, the scientists used swabs and placed the bacteria in a Petri dish. Later they discovered that there was no contamination at all after the surfaces were cleaned with liquefied ozone.

The Rachel Ray assessment found that the “liquefied ozone” technology was remarkably effective in sanitizing the kitchen counters of an average home.

Another method of testing for living organisms, such as bacteria, plant cells and mold is the ATP (adenosine triphosphate) swab test. ATP can be found in hair follicles, food residue, human saliva, even fingerprints and mold.

The challenge had been that until recently, such test-

ing devices were bulky, expensive and largely unknown to the contents processing industry.

As it turns out, some restoration companies already had ATP tests. Hospitals have been using them for years and field hygienists used them to test water, food processing plants and other places where health was an issue.

Today though, the science behind the early ATP test kits has advanced to such an extent that the instruments have become less costly, fit in the hand of the technician and can offer immediate readings before and after a sanitizing effort.

Agents, adjusters and especially homeowners find comfort in being able to instantly monitor the sanitizing efforts of the contents pros.

And the pros themselves take pride in being able to meet or exceed such exacting standards!

Let In The Light

Every home insurance adjuster and most agents are familiar with ultrasonic cleaning, but few know that ultrasonics entered the restoration arena through a “side door” – blind cleaning.

Of course, we have heard legends of some beginners trying other methods – everything from running the soot-stained blinds over to a car wash and blasting them clean, to lowering them into a sudsy solution in the homeowner’s bathtub. But power washers and steam can ruin the blind surface (thin metal, wood or plastic). Even scrubbing with plastic brushes can scratch, pit or scuff blinds that are covered in gritty soot.

So there are really only two safe ways to avoid permanent damage to fragile exteriors – one is to submerge the blinds in a non-corrosive “bath” and gently agitate the surface with wet microfiber cloths. That one takes time and a lot of care.

The second way is good, old fashioned ultrasonics. We say “old fashioned,” because the company that started it all, began using ultrasonics to clean blinds over a quarter of a century ago, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

That process has proven itself

with all types of blinds – aluminum, fabric, wood, plastic and even more. And it can clean the various materials used for the slats, cords and head-rails as well as the components used to open and close the blinds themselves.

No soot, grease, dust or bacteria can escape the ultrasonics technology.

More recently it has been successfully used to clean the paddles on fans, the “lenses” that cover fluorescent lights and all manner of hard contents.

And one thing on which contents pros, adjusters and home or business owners all agree is a real bonus – the whole process cleans far more efficiently and effectively than cleaning each piece by hand.

The blinds are placed in an ultrasonics tank that is filled with water, cleaning solutions, water softeners and rinse agents. Next they are moved into a rinse chamber and finally they are air dried or “blow dried.”

No abrasives, no hard brushes, no damaging chemicals.

Some contents pros even like to finish things off with an “insider’s secret.” They spray a little liquid fabric softener on the slats so they resist future contaminants.



Contents Pros Don't Work In a Vacuum

Contents Pros are intensely aware of the environment in which they work. When there are smoke odors and soot they are very careful to avoid cross contamination. They create walkways, they see to it that no particulates are carried from one room to another and they pay particular attention to the indoor air quality.

That is why they don't use substandard vacuums. “Second rate vacuums ‘leak like a sieve’” said one spokesperson, “soot, mold particles, dust and pet dander can easily escape and go wafting through the air, remaining aloft for hours.”

Contents pros are working in the vicinity of the vacuums, so it is of immediate interest to them that the machines are in excellent condition – they are breathing the air that the equipment produces.

They prefer vacuums with HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) type filters and high quality replacement bags – that helps keep particulates and contaminants from being released into the air.

When soot particles and other contaminants are spread around, it impacts the contents pros and in requires a whole new cleaning job – just when they thought they had brought this one to a close.



Contents “Secret” Codes

On occasion you might see a contents pro reading the label on a carpet or upholstered couch or chair. They don't always find what they are looking for, but some manufacturers are now putting codes on their labels.

For example, code “W” means the dyes used are stable – they won't run, fade or be damaged if water-based cleaning agents are used.

Codes “X and X/S” means that these fabrics can't be cleaned using traditional solvents, foams, or water-based cleansers.

There are about half-a dozen such codes and they each tell their own story to the trained eye of a contents professional.





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