

## Are you prepared for a flood? Now's the time

By Jeff Baker

Earlier this month was a very scary time for thousands in Northeast Ohio who woke up Monday morning to standing water (if they were lucky) or sewage (if they weren't) in their home or business.

Have you ever thought about what you would do if it were your home or your company that was flooded? What would you do in that situation? Can you handle it yourself? What can be saved and what should be discarded? Should you turn this into your insurance company? If you don't think you can handle it yourself, who should you call? What type of business even handles such things? How do I know who I can trust?

The old adage, "On ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," never seemed so appropriate. **After** an event like this has taken place is not the time to try to answer these questions. Whether you rent an apartment, office or you're responsible for a large corporation **now** is the time to put together a response plan.

There are so many variables that must be considered when determining how to effectively deal with water damage it can be overwhelming. One of the most important variables is what was the source of the water? Did it start as fresh, potable water? Are you sure?

For example, is it water from the supply line going to the dishwasher or did the dishwasher leak during its cycle? The supply line is considered fresh, Category 1 ("does not pose a hazard if consumed by humans"\*) water, while the leak would be considered Category 2 (contains "some degree of contamination and could cause sickness or discomfort if consumed by humans"—check out stormwater tips here: [www.certifiedcleaners.org/ts\\_storm-damage-restoration.shtml](http://www.certifiedcleaners.org/ts_storm-damage-restoration.shtml))

Answering that question, and many more like it, determines how to proceed with mitigation. The best source of information is The Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification ([www.IICRC.org](http://www.IICRC.org)), which is the independent certification body that sets the standards in the cleaning and restoration industry. The IICRC writes, sets and publishes the following industry standards: S100 Standard Reference Guide for Professional Carpet Cleaning, S300 Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Upholstery Cleaning, ANSI/IICRC S500-2006 Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Water Damage Restoration, S520 Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Mold Remediation.

The **bad news** is that if the cleanup is not done properly, secondary damage can cause more issues than the original water damage. Problems such as mold, rot and health complications are a few examples.

The **good news** is that if you find a restoration professional you trust your disaster response plan can be as simple as a phone call. Be careful when choosing a company to partner with, as not all are created equal. Ask the following questions before making your decision:

- How long have you been performing professional fire and water mitigation?
- Are you an IICRC-certified firm? If so, ask for its “company number.”
- What IICRC certifications do your technicians hold? They should have the following certifications: water restoration technician, applied structural drying, fire & smoke restoration technician, among others.
- Are you available 24 hours a day, seven days a week?
- How far is the clean-up company from your home or office?
- Can the company handle any ancillary services such as duct cleaning, board ups, etc?

Finding a partner you can trust now will save many sleepless nights later.

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