

# CONTENTS SOLUTIONS

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THE GO-TO-GUIDE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY RESTORATION

## WHAT EXACTLY IS A CONTENTS PRO? And why should you care?



**ICE? DAM!**  
It's not what you  
think, or maybe it is!

**MOLD ON MOLD OFF**  
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from valued contents

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# What Exactly Is a “Contents Pro” And why should you care?

When there is damage to property from fire, smoke, water or sewage, the restoration process is often viewed as two separate arenas – structural and “contents processing.”

Two large certifying entities, the IICRC (the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification) and the RIA (Restoration Industry Association) recommend standards of care based on consultation and research conducted by national and international science organizations, regional trade associations serving the disaster restoration industry, chemical formulators, equipment manufacturers, cleaning and restoration schools, restoration service

companies, the insurance industry and many other resources.

In the contents restoration branch, two of the leading experts are Martin King CR and Barb Jackson CR – both of whom teach and consult for the RIA.

Barb Jackson CR has taught IICRC accredited classes nationally and internationally for almost 20 years. It has been estimated that the over 500 restoration companies for which she has provided training, have collectively saved literally millions of dollars for insurance firms by restoring rather than replacing home and business valuables.

When computers, big screen TVs, books, tables, beds, refrigerators, stoves, couches, etc., are moved by restoration professionals, it is referred to as “contents manipulation.” And quite frankly any restoration worker, with enough strength can move a couch, but it takes a Contents Pro to restore one.

Not long ago it was common practice to simply “cash out,” questionable contents – wet computers, sewage drenched clothing and furniture, rusted metal, scorched ceramics and china, burned paintings – all were routinely hauled off to the city trash heap.

Today, as much as 85% to 90% of such items are being restored

for an estimated 30% of what it would have cost to replace them.

It wasn't that insurance adjusters and homeowners of the past were wasteful; after all, who would have thought that a computer, drenched by fire hoses and clogged with soot could ever function again? And with the processes of yesterday, it would have been impossible to ensure the safety of clothing that had been drenched in raw sewage.

But with modern methods, machines and training, the contents pros consistently save massive sums for the insurance companies and the insured. The cleaning, packing and transport of home and office valuables is no longer a “hit and miss,” “trial and error,” venture. Today it is far more a science than an art.

Even so, the contents professionals often face new and delicate challenges never seen in the industry before – which explains why they have so readily adopted Barb Jackson's maxim, “Adapt, Create, Proceed!”

Insurance professionals are now seeking out companies that specialize in contents cleaning, digital photo inventory, transport and “pack back,” not only because of their expertise, but because if ever they come up against a conundrum they cannot solve, they always have their “million dollar rolodex” in which they keep their expert associates.

Some professionals look for problems – contents pros seek solutions.



## The Saga of the Smoking Jacket

The Internet is still dispensing bad information.

Recently, a fellow wrote that his leather jacket had “survived” a house fire and he needed help to get the smoke smell out.

One reader suggested that he hang it on a clothes line outside – and yes, given time and proper conditions Mother Nature might help a bit – 50 years ago restoration companies used to open windows and used fans to blow the smoke odor out of the house.

It worked...temporarily. But often, the smoke particulates eventually came leaching out of all the surfaces left untreated in the house.

Someone else suggested that putting the leather jacket in a bag with “dryer sheets,” would solve the smoke problem.

It wouldn't, but we applaud the writer's ingenuity.

And the writer who suggested that the leather jacket be placed in a bag with baking soda, said, “Good luck.”

Our sentiments exactly.

The closest we saw to an actual remedy was the advice giver who said, “When we had our house fire all the clothing that was saved was taken to a dry cleaners to be cleaned. Then they were put in a room with an ozone machine and ours was salvaged.”

Our only challenge with that was that ozone can be harmful to leather, plastic and other fragile surfaces, so the professionals who use it can't simply be knowledgeable, they must be experienced as well.





# Ice? Dam!

Ice Dams are ridges of ice that form at the edges of roofs and prevent the water from melting snow to harmlessly drain over the side. Instead the water backs up and leaks down the walls, into the floors and even down to the substructure of the building.

Ice Dams often form when temperatures fall to below freezing, then slightly above, then below, creating a rock hard sheet of ice. The heat from the home rises, melting the lighter snow but not the dam of ice.

The backed-up water trickles down, making brown stains on walls, saturating carpets, dripping into closets, ruining clothes, shorting out electrical outlets and creating an ideal environment for mold growth.

When the contents pros arrive, one of the first things you will see them doing is unplugging anything electric that is anywhere near the water damage – some water may not be seen, but could easily be traveling toward the wiring and sockets behind the wall.

Another “first thing,” is to get all furniture away from suspect walls and off the carpets that may be absorbing water from the baseboards like a sponge. Because of inclement weather outside, the contents processors may not take any furniture out of the house, but they will be busily putting things under the legs and getting comforters and other bed clothes away from the walls and carpet as well.

Ice dam leaks are slow, quiet and persistent.



In one home a workman who was finding the water and draining it from pockets in the ceiling, reached up to a section of suspiciously bulging ceiling drywall that was obviously saturated with water and was holding back gallons of dirty liquid that had filtered in from the roof. He was about to poke a hole in the lowest point of the bulge – which seemed only logical. That way the water would drain out the hole at the bottom.

But a contents pro persuaded him to “Stop!” She explained that when you make a hole in wet ceiling drywall, it tends to “tear” at that weakest point and you get a sudden flood. If you make the hole higher up, at the edge of the bulge and let out a little at a time, then work your way toward the lowest point, you control the flow and don’t end up with a mess.

Later she explained that she was just protecting the contents below – the bulge was in the kitchen!

# Mold Destroys Art

After a flood, we expect mold in walls, carpets, even books, but now the insurance companies are concerned about a new mold menace – the mold on art works, antique cloth and even photographs.

There is an art conservation center in the South that has already restored over 6000 works of art since Hurricane Katrina – most of them had mold damage.

Mold can stain art canvases, disintegrate paint and even change the pigment’s color. Photographs appear to be “eaten” by mold as it breaks down the emulsion from which they were created.

It has become a major challenge for the insured and the insurance companies.

When the contents pros arrive you will see them immediately containing and removing the mold and drying the air. Climate controlled storage is arranged whenever possible.

They will save all that can be rescued, then they will call in the art conservation experts. Insurance adjusters, who know what the contents pros can do, call on them again and again because they know that when a contents pro is on the scene, the insurance company is going to save many, many thousands of dollars.



## Cleaning for a Reason

Sometimes contents pros find themselves in devastated areas where their favorite cleaning solutions and mixtures are unavailable – because the local hardware stores are underwater. So like “MacGyver” of the television series, they improvise. Can vinegar kill mold? Absolutely.

Surprisingly, baking soda can kill a different type of mold and when combined with vinegar, it becomes a “double whammy.” Oddly, bleach will not kill mold (but it will make it transparent), so bleach is reserved only as a last ditch disinfectant.

The citric acid in the breakfast drink Tang®, will break up hard water and scale. Even salt, coffee grounds and club soda have found their way into the contents pros’ “in a pinch,” arsenal. They aren’t their first line of defense, but the contents pros never back down from a challenge – they just find new ways to enter the arena.





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