

# CONTENTS SOLUTIONS

THE GO-TO-GUIDE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY RESTORATION

Vol.10, Issue 12

## “Wet” Smoke - Black Soot

**Human Friendly  
Antibacterial Cleaner**

**Mold  
Not Safe For  
Human Consumption**

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# Wet Smoke – Contents Pros Toughest Assignment

When the insured has had a fire it is rare that they care what sort of smoke was generated. But for a contents pro it makes all the difference in the world.

Usually the restoration profession categorizes smoke as “wet” or “dry.”

Dry smoke is normally produced from fast burning substances such as paper, wood, cotton fabrics and other natural fibers. It has plenty of oxygen and lots of heat.

Wet smoke comes from a lower heat, slow burning fire, in which the flames could not find enough oxygen and smoldered for a long time giving off a black, thick, sticky smoke that clings to everything and anything it touches. Typically, you will find plastic, synthetic clothing or blankets, the foam rubber in beds and couches, solvents and aerosols involved in this type of smoke. Because it has lots of time to “flow” out and spread, it works itself into every crack, crevice

and crease it can find and is remarkably difficult to extract.

In a previous issue of Contents Solutions we wrote about “Black Webs,” that look like spider webs that festoon and drape themselves in corners, over lamps, across walls and along furniture and curtains of all kinds. They are almost always found in a “wet” fire.

The ash and soot from a wet fire are easily smeared and it is common to find the insured trying to clean it themselves – with disastrous results.

In fact there is a possible third type of smoke that mimics “wet” smoke but can appear so slowly in a home that the owners are convinced that it isn’t smoke at all but merely poor housekeeping. It is from what some in the industry call a, “slow puff back.”

A regular puff back cannot be missed. An oil furnace builds up a thick residue and “puffs” back in a low grade explosion leaving the interior of a home or office instantly “painted” with soot. Anyone who has experienced it can tell you that it takes a long, tedious and costly effort to remediate.

A “slow” puff back manifests by gradually “leaking” the oily soot into the building, creating dark circles on table tops, walls and furniture. Dirty striations appear around registers and give the home the appearance of needing a good scrubbing. The owners will begin to notice dark fingerprints here and there and are shocked when they spray them with a household cleaner and wipe them, only to discover that the whole wall is coated with a black, smeary substance.

Dry smoke jobs are far less costly to deal with. Wet smoke and slow or “explosive” puff backs should only be tackled by contents pros who have the tools, processes and training to do a proper job. Anyone else is likely to make the clean-up twice as expensive, by causing all the work to be re-done when the professionals are finally called in.



## Mold – Love It Or Leave It

Homeowners wonder, “Hey I’ve had a little mold in my bathroom, or under the kitchen sink, or in the basement for years, and I’m fine – is it really all that harmful?”

Medical studies with U.S. farmers and soldiers have discovered significant health problems directly associated with mold.

“Environmental Health Perspectives,” reported that world wide, exposure to work place mold is directly attributable to 35% of adult asthma.

The American Academy for Pediatrics (AAP) Committee on Environmental Health released a statement (April 6, 1998) concerning the toxic effects of indoor molds and acute idiopathic pulmonary hemorrhage in infants.

The Mayo Clinic Proceedings reported on Sept. 13, 1999, “Researchers have found that chronic sinusitis, a condition that affects about 37 million people in the United States, is apparently caused by an immune response

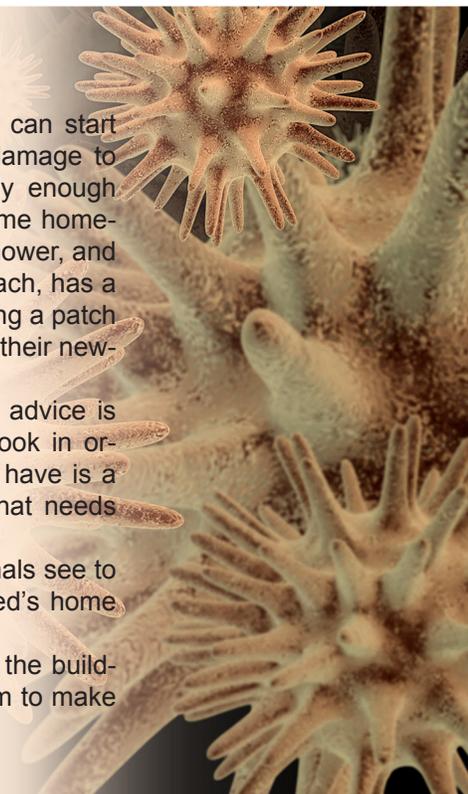
to fungus (mold).”

With the right conditions, mold can start to grow in 24 hours after water damage to a home or office and interestingly enough some writers point out that the same homeowner who sees black mold in a shower, and shrugs it off by spraying it with bleach, has a decidedly different reaction to seeing a patch of mold in a pediatrics ward where their newborn child has been placed.

Toxic mold is...well...toxic. Our advice is to get a contents pro to have a look in order to discover whether what you have is a relatively harmless type, or one that needs immediate attention.

Mold grows. Contents professionals see to it that it doesn’t grow in the insured’s home or office.

Mold wants water to thrive. Get the building dried out, then call the “A” team to make it safe.





## Antiviral, Antifungal, Antibacterial – But So Harmless You Can Drink It!

For many months we have been writing about new and innovative anti-bacterial liquids and sprays. Insurance adjusters and agents have really taken notice of those compounds that allow a working office to stay open or a family to stay in its home while the anti-microbials are used

Well, we are happy to announce that the contents pros have found a new, EPA Registered, broad spectrum antibacterial, antifungal, and antiviral disinfectant that can provide up to 24-hour residual effectiveness.

And it is fast! It can kill the most dangerous pathogens (H1N1, MRSA, HIV, etc.) in under two minutes and many such dangerous germs in under 30 seconds! Yet it keeps on killing for up to 24 hours!

Originally created for medical, nursing and childcare facilities, it is now a staple among restoration professionals.

One of its derivatives purifies drinking water, and hundreds of thousands of bottles have been shipped to Southern Asia, China and recently to the earthquake victims in Haiti. With

it they can take water from streams, lakes, rivers or rainfall and make it potable in about ten minutes.

Another of the derivatives is being used on ships to fight outbreaks of the Norovirus that mimic stomach flu and have plagued passengers and crews for over two decades. They just mix it with water and spray it on any hard surface – it is totally non-toxic but remarkably effective as a disinfectant.

Even the venerable Dr. Bob Arnot (you might remember him as a medical, foreign correspondent, who reported for NBC), has weighed in, favoring these new, ultra-fast solutions.

One of the things that impressed the M.D. was the 24 hour residual effect. Most common household cleaning liquids stop working as soon as they dry.

But the demonstration that shocked viewing audiences was that on a live news segment, Dr. Arnot actually sprayed one of these antibacterial cleaners in his own mouth! He pointed out that several other mixtures that he had on the table top in front of him could kill germs, but that they were also toxic.

Contents pros are “human friendly,” and if there is a way to clean, disinfect and make an office or home safe without resorting to harsh, poisonous substances, that is always their first choice. After all, they are working in the same environment they are creating for the owners, property managers and insurance professionals with whom they associate.

## Getting the Smoke Out

One of the many techniques, used by contents pros to remove smoke odors, is called, “Thermal fogging.” This process entails driving very fine molecules of superheated air, combined with specially formulated chemical agents, deep into the fabrics, nooks and crannies of the target articles.

The heat opens up the material (much like opening the pores of one’s skin with a steam sauna). The formula penetrates and bonds with the smoke particulates, encapsulating them and neutralizing their ability to “off gas,” and release the smoke fragrance.

The results with the petroleum based mixtures have been most satisfactory, and recently some companies have been experimenting with new “food and cosmetic grade” ingredients that are delivered in a water base, with the anticipation that they will have a shorter recovery time and faster re-occupancy.

Thermal foggers have been used in the restoration industry for some time. Most commonly they are used to penetrate walls and wood floors with the heat, fine droplets and smoke-remediating chemicals.

They have also been used to great effect in reducing the mosquito populations so prevalent around hurricane damaged homes (of course different chemical compounds are used for each type of job).

## Insider Secret

Sometimes contents pros find themselves in devastated areas where their favorite chemicals 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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