

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hand reaching out to open a door handle. The door is a light-colored wood. The background is out of focus, showing an interior space.

## *The Welcoming Wave:* Embracing the Power of Open Door Policy



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Myldred Ingram [✉](#)

# Editorial Comment

## Working through the Holidays

While many people look forward to the holiday season as a time of relaxation and celebration, there are those who find themselves working during this festive period especially those in the restoration, remediation and cleaning industry. Whether you're in a profession that requires round-the-clock coverage or simply have a shift that falls on a holiday, hopefully this note helps you navigate through the challenges and make the most of the season while on the job.

The following are just a few steps that you could take to help make working during the holiday season a more pleasant experience.



**Embracing the Holiday Spirit:** Just because you're working doesn't mean you can't enjoy the holiday spirit. Decorate your workspace with festive ornaments, lights, or even a small tree. Play holiday music or wear a festive accessory to keep the mood upbeat and cheerful.

**Connect with Co-workers:** Working on a holiday can create a sense of camaraderie among colleagues who are in the same boat. Take the opportunity to bond with your co-workers by organizing a potluck or exchanging small gifts. Sharing a meal or engaging in a friendly conversation can help create a supportive and festive atmosphere.

**Bring the Celebration to Work:** If possible, plan a small celebration during your break time. Organize a gift exchange or a Secret Santa activity, where everyone can participate and feel the holiday spirit. Consider bringing in some treats or organizing a themed lunch to make the day feel special.

**Stay Connected with Loved Ones:** Even if you can't be with your loved ones physically, technology allows us to stay connected virtually. Take breaks to video call or message your family and friends throughout the day. Sharing stories and updates with them can help you feel connected and included in the festivities.

**Treat Yourself:** Working on a holiday can be challenging, so make sure to treat yourself. Bring your favorite snacks or a special treat to enjoy during your breaks. Take a few moments to relax and recharge, whether it's by reading a book, listening to music, or practicing some mindfulness exercises.

**Find Joy in Helping Others:** Remember that your work during the holiday season is essential and appreciated. Whether you're providing healthcare, emergency services, or simply keeping essential businesses running smoothly, your contribution makes a difference. Find joy in knowing that you are helping others and providing a valuable service during this time.

Working during the holiday season can be tough, but with a positive mindset and a few strategies in place, you can make the most of the situation. Embrace the holiday spirit, connect with your co-workers, and find ways to celebrate and enjoy the season, even while on the job. Remember, your dedication and hard work are appreciated, and you are making a difference. Happy holidays, and thank you for your service!

### Myldred Ingram

Myldred Ingram  
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# Tattletales, Whistleblowers, and an Open Door Policy

By Timothy E. Hull, CR



One of the elements of working in small business that I have always appreciated is having direct communication with the owner or CEO of the company. The ability to freely express ideas and concerns at the top level is priceless. As an employee, it makes you feel valued anytime the person who signs your paycheck takes time to listen to you. This type of Open Door Policy (ODP as it is commonly referred to) can have many benefits for an organization, its culture, and its people.

While many companies strive to promote and achieve an ODP, there are times when it can be detrimental to their cause. Consider the small- to mid-size entrepreneurial company that started in the owner's garage with a handful of trusted colleagues, friends, or family members. As that business grows and more people are added, mid-levels of management become necessary and are assumed by those with tenure in the business. A chain of command is formed. Eventually, the business will outgrow some of those senior employees and more-skilled managers will need to be brought into the organization while the founding members are relegated to more appropriate roles.

In my observation, these types of situations are more common than not among service-based businesses. Where things get funky is when an ODP starts to interfere with the chain of command. Senior employees on the lower end of the organization chart, but with long-standing relationships with the owner, feel entitled to go to them with any situation and expect resolution, ignoring the levels of authority that precede. This can be harmful and sometimes catastrophic to a company's culture in many ways.

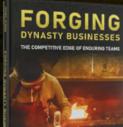
Jumping rank on the organization chart undermines the authority of mid-level managers who have a duty and a responsibility for the performance of their departments and teams within the organization. When subordinates go over their head, there is a significant lack of respect for authority that is conveyed, jeopardizing their ability to effectively manage the employees of their department. Even worse, if the owner makes a decision or gives direction to the employee that is out of alignment with the manager, mixed signals, confusion, and chaos can ensue. These are dangerous waters that can sink a ship quickly.

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In this situation, the natural tendency is to close the ODP and adopt big, corporate-style policies with militaristic-like qualities. The result can feel like a bunch of independent work groups with their own agendas and a fragmented culture where everyone is just looking out for their own back. Senior leadership is viewed as those sitting in an ivory tower and frontline workers feel like minions. This type of bureaucratic environment is certainly not healthy for a growing business.

This entire topic can be a perplexing scenario, because the chain of command is necessary and an ODP is proven effective, especially in small businesses. The critical component to having both coexist resides in leadership.

In the book *Silos, Politics, and Turf Wars*, author Patrick Lencioni writes, "In most situations, silos rise up not because of what executives are doing purposefully, but rather because of what they are failing to do: provide themselves and their employees with a compelling context for working together." He goes on to explain the importance of goals, objectives, and measurable standards of performance—all of which are governed by communication, bringing us back to the importance of an ODP.

Considering the likely scenarios that routinely play out in business involving bypassing the chain of command, I would propose that each and every scenario involves two important types of employees: tattletales and whistleblowers, both of whom must be treated very carefully by owners and CEOs. This is because how the situations are handled is the key to maintaining an ODP while respecting the chain of command.



### Tattletales

These informants can sometimes be prolific in an organization and are often seen hovered around the water cooler, engaging in gossip, and feeding fuel to the latest personnel drama. They also wear two hats, the first of which is "permission seeker." The permission seeker tattletale engages in the classic scenario where they ask for permission from their manager but don't like the answer, so they go over their boss's head to try to get permission from a higher level. Most parents can relate to this. It's the same as when mom says no and the child asks dad, hoping to get a yes.

The second hat is "self-interest" where direction that is given or decisions made by their immediate supervisor conflict with the employee's personal desires or agendas. This action can be reckless, especially when the employee's values are not in alignment with those of the company. If left unaddressed, the resentment can turn into a cancer that spreads rapidly through the ranks.

Senior leaders must deal with tattletales carefully but firmly, understanding that how they are dealt with is more important than the context of the situation itself. Regardless of which hat the tattletale is wearing at the time, the response should be consistent in referring the employee back to the decision or direction of their manager. The importance of a unified front is just as critical in business as it is in parenting. Any difference of opinion between the owner and manager should be discussed in a private meeting, with the ultimate decision being communicated through the chain of command. When executed correctly, tattletales either fall in line quickly or leave—both of which are positive outcomes.

### Whistleblowers

The term whistleblower may seem a little harsh when you think of them in the same company as folks like Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, or W. Mark Felt, because whistleblowing is often associated with illicit activity. However, if we consider illicit activity as not just illegal but that which is not in alignment with the best interests of the company, we can see value in what whistleblowers bring to the table.



These scenarios can occur frequently, especially when there are long standing and loyal employees who have a healthy relationship with the individual at the top of the organization chart. With an ODP, these folks, or anyone else in the company, should feel free to speak to senior leaders about concerns that could be detrimental to the organization; are against company policy; or place employees, customers, or other stakeholders in harm's way.

One important element to consider with respect to whistleblowing is when the employee has directly challenged an idea or decision with their immediate supervisor. Senior leaders should not openly criticize managers in front of subordinates. This is critical to preserving the integrity in the chain of command. Rather, they should validate the concerns of the employee who comes to them, reassure them that they will look into the situation, and then follow up with them—with the supervisor, when appropriate—in a timely manner.

As we come to understand more about the importance of the roles that tattletales and whistleblowers play with respect to maintaining an ODP, we also realize that using them in a productive manner involves coaching them on the need to give their immediate supervisors the opportunity to address their issues and concerns before

bringing them to upper management. It also involves understanding the temptation to do so given their tenure or relationship with the owner. Deciphering the difference between a genuine concern for the welfare of the organization and disingenuous personal agendas can be difficult. Regardless, employees who gripe and complain about issues simply because they don't benefit them personally should be dealt with firmly and swiftly, making it clear that their manager's decisions are supported at the highest level.

All of this must, of course, be coupled with strong levels of communication across the leadership and management teams of the company. There is no substitute in an organization for a clearly defined vision, core values, and measurable goals and objectives. The role of the owner/CEO is to disseminate this information on a routine basis, listen carefully to all employees, and act appropriately in a timely fashion by maintaining an ODP and respecting the chain of command.



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**Safety Insights**

# Have You Considered Needle Stick Injuries

By Barry Rice

## Need Stick Injuries

A friend of mine in the Restoration Industry mentioned a recent event they had with an employee getting a puncture wound on a jobsite. A technician was pulling up carpet and felt a stinging sensation on a finger. He realized something had punctured his finger and looked closer. He found a collection of devices (pictured below) that are used for checking blood insulin levels. Apparently one of the devices did not have a cover and that was what punctured his skin.

I researched the devices and found they are only a few inches long and the needle is about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " long. Based on that relatively small size, it's pretty easy to see how a Restoration Technician might not see one of these devices if they aren't in plain sight.

Based on this experience and others I have seen over the years, I wanted to provide some awareness of these injuries, discuss OSHA's expectations, and pass on PPE that I am aware of. I hope you find the following information valuable!



## Needlesticks or Sharps Injuries?

I have found that OSHA and the medical industry use the terms needlestick and sharps injury interchangeably.

I have found that OSHA and the medical industry use the terms **needlestick** and **sharps injury** interchangeably. For this article we are talking about both – which result in a puncture wound. However, I'm also going to throw in cuts from scalpels and other devices. Here are some of the devices:

- Syringes and needles used to inject or withdraw
- Lances and other small devices used to test blood
- Scalpels and other cutting devices
- "Other" medical devices that cut/slice/puncture

### Potential Employee Impact

All of these devices have the potential to cut or puncture the skin and if the devices are contaminated, they could allow any of the following to enter a technician's body:

- Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP)
- Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM's)
- Unknown drugs or chemicals

Obviously with scalpels, there is the potential for cuts to allow one of the above concerns into the body.

Some of these pathogens/materials could have an immediate negative health effect on the technician (an acute exposure) or they could manifest themselves in a longer-term medical situation (Hepatitis B infections).

Regardless of the result, punctures from sharp devices open up an exposure route for these pathogens and materials.

### OSHA Expectations

I'll continue down the path of two potential impacts – cuts and punctures.

#### Cuts

OSHA has a very basic standard for hand protection that requires employers to select and require employees to use appropriate hand protection. OSHA also wants the performance characteristics to be evaluated relative to the tasks. (1) What does that mean for cuts? That means providing cut-resistant gloves to employees. I would also recommend some basic training and awareness on cut prevention (e.g. cut away from your body, use sharp knives/edges, and consider safety knives with guarded blades).

#### Punctures

The OSHA standard for hand protection would also apply for punctures. (1) In this application, the use of puncture-resistant or needle stick resistant gloves. Likewise, training and awareness for employees would go a long way in prevention efforts.

#### BBP Exposure

As mentioned, both cuts and punctures provide a pathway into the body for pathogens, drugs, and other undesirable materials. OSHA has actually put a plan into place for these injuries – the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act. (2) This Act required OSHA to modify the Bloodborne Pathogen standard (3) to include needlestick or sharps injuries, as well as minimizing exposure to contaminated sharps. (2) Be sure to understand an employer's responsibilities outlined in the BBP standard if you have a needlestick injury.

I won't go into detail on the BBP hazards and details, as I have already done that in R&R's February 2023 and March 2023 issues. In those issues I cover:

- Restoration Industry Exposure to BBP's
- OSHA BBP Expectations
- Vaccines
- Pathogens Information



### Exposure

My friend's experience reminded me of jobs and situations with needles and sharps exposure I have seen over

the years. During work in New York City hospitals after Superstorm Sandy, I saw many rooms with syringes and scalpels left out in the open. In some cases, water had found its way in and around these devices resulting in sharp, rusty items that needed to be disposed of. Another memory was walking between company office buildings in a small town, looking down on the street, and seeing a discarded syringe without a cover on the needle.

However, that was only two situations. I have to admit that I haven't consistently observed these potential exposure situations on a consistent recurring basis. In fact, my friend's situation was the first exposure I have heard of in years.

Ultimately, we can't take a lackadaisical approach to the potential (or lack thereof) for needles and sharps exposure - I believe the risk is too great and exposure will continue to increase for our industry as more hospitals and medical clinics are built.

## **Awareness**

It is certainly possible to encounter needles, syringes, and other sharps almost anywhere. However, I believe educating technicians and giving special awareness to specific buildings and situations can greatly reduce risks. Here are some examples:

- Hospitals and Medical buildings: there are obviously areas in these buildings that will always have the potential for needlestick and sharps injuries.
- Dental Offices: don't forget that the average dentist can have sharps and dental surgical centers will be even more similar equipment.
- Hotels: guests that legally and illegally use needles, syringes, and sharps will stay at hotels and could not only leave them out but also conceal them in the room.
- Residences: the presence of needles, syringes, and sharps may not be as obvious in a home as compared to a hospital or medical office. However, technicians will need to be observant and pay attention to clues, such as mention of personal medical conditions by the resident or signs of illegal drug use.

## **Prevention**

### **Training**

I believe it's critical that Restoration Companies build needlestick and sharps training into annual BBP training. Depending on the training source and format, that content may or may not already be included. You may have to do an additional review specifically for needlesticks/sharps.

### **Certification**

I am not aware of certification on handling needles, syringes, and sharps for the Restoration Industry. However, BBP training and the IICRC's Trauma and Crime Scene Tech (TCST) certification will cover many of the hazards I've already discussed.



### **Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)**

Ultimately, jobsite hazard awareness and correction of those hazards should be addressed in the JHA. This makes it critical for a supervisor or employee to complete a JHA and identify potential needlestick/sharps hazards on jobs with a high risk of puncture and cut exposure.

### **PPE/Glove Protection**

Advancements in glove protection appear almost every year for cuts, punctures, and needlesticks. Gloves with cut and puncture protection have good dexterity these days. For cut protection, I like gloves with 18-gauge thickness and cut level 3 or 4 protection. Gloves with needlestick protection are thicker and certainly have less dexterity. However, it appears that demands from the law enforcement community has resulted in improvements to glove protection and dexterity over recent years.

I strongly recommend Restoration Companies contact a PPE Supplier (e.g. Aramsco) or glove manufacturer (e.g. Hexarmor or Superior) to discuss the options and protection levels.

### Needle/Sharps Waste

Needles, syringes, and other sharps can be easily contained and disposed of in a sharps container. The Restorer should be aware of handling and disposal requirements for their state, county, or city. I recommend contacting a local waste contractor for specific information and containers.

### Summary

Needlestick injuries and exposure for the Restoration Industry are nowhere near as frequent as employees working in the medical field. However, our work does take us into situations where there is an exposure risk. Unfortunately, some of the highest restoration risks come from unknown and unseen needles, syringes, and sharps. Based on this, I recommend educating techs to raise awareness, provide them with training and BBP certification, and provide protective gloves.

### Resources

[Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Quick Reference Guide to the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard.](#)

[MDS Associates, Drive Compliance. Stop Needlesticks with Puncture-Resistant Work Gloves.](#)

[Magid Glove & Safety Manufacturing Company, Better Puncture-Resistant Gloves For Industrial Workers.](#)

### References

1. [Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 1910 Subpart I, Personal Protective Equipment, Hand Protection 1910.138.](#)
2. [Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Standard Interpretations, Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act, February 20, 2003.](#)
3. [Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 1910, Bloodborne pathogens, 1910.1030.](#)



**Barry Rice** is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP) with over 20 years of experience. He is the Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) Director for Signal Restoration Service's family of companies that includes Signal, PuroClean, and others. Mr. Rice has supported EHS efforts in various industries, including environmental restoration, heavy industrial manufacturing, mechanical field service, automotive and aircraft manufacturing support, residential and commercial construction, and disaster restoration. If you have questions or would like to speak to Barry, he can be reached at 248-878-5662 or [barrynrice@gmail.com](mailto:barrynrice@gmail.com).



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# Innovative Solutions for Effective Storm Water Management in Urban Environments

By Oscar Collins



Urbanization is on the rise, with more people choosing to call cities their home. While this movement brings countless advantages, it also poses significant challenges, particularly in stormwater management.

In densely populated urban areas, the efficient control and mitigation of flooding caused by intense rainfall is paramount. To tackle this issue, engineers, urban planners and environmentalists are hard at work developing innovative solutions for effective stormwater management.

## Urbanization and Stormwater Challenges

As urban landscapes expand and grow, impermeable surfaces such as roads, parking lots and buildings often replace the natural terrain. This transition disrupts the natural water cycle, resulting in an increased volume of water runoff during rainfall.

Inadequate drainage systems and aging infrastructures compound the problem, leading to urban flooding, property damage and even injury or loss of life.

Rapid industrialization and urban growth are some of the main causes of this issue. The Industrial Revolution led to rapid urbanization in the late 18th century, as people flocked to cities in search of employment in factories. This unprecedented growth strained existing infrastructure and led to poorly planned, densely populated areas.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, urban planning was often inadequate, if it existed at all. Cities expanded haphazardly, resulting in irregular street layouts and insufficient drainage systems. Lack of comprehensive planning exacerbated stormwater management issues.

Furthermore, many older cities have aging stormwater and sewage infrastructure that cannot handle the volume and intensity of rainfall seen today. Over time, these systems have deteriorated, leading to frequent leaks and overflows. Climate change has also led to more frequent and intense storms. Urban areas are ill-prepared to handle such rapid influxes of water, causing flooding and infrastructure damage.



One of the most notable incidents is Hurricane Katrina, which struck in 2005. The failure of stormwater management systems in New Orleans during Katrina led to catastrophic flooding. Levee breaches and inadequate drainage systems caused widespread devastation. The storm claimed over 1,800 lives, making it one

of the deadliest natural disasters in U.S. history. This event led engineers to rethink stormwater management regarding urban planning and architectural design.

Professionals in various fields – including restoration and remediation technicians – have collaborated to devise innovative stormwater management strategies to address these issues. These experts are crucial in assessing water damage and restoring affected areas to their pre-storm conditions. They assist in detaining stormwater, removing pollutants, and implementing green infrastructure to capture and reuse stormwater.

In addition, professionals can provide consultation on the proactive management of manufactured lakes and stormwater ponds in urban areas, which involves maintaining a healthy aquatic ecosystem through measures such as dredging and biomanipulation techniques, stabilizing shorelines, and using nutrient remediation methods.

To combat the effects of climate change, communities, businesses, governments and individuals are adopting sustainable practices.

### **Green Infrastructure**

One of the most promising developments in urban stormwater management is incorporating green infrastructure. This strategy aims to restore natural hydrological processes within urban areas.

Green infrastructure includes a variety of features such as green roofs, permeable pavement, bioswales and rain gardens. These elements capture and slow the flow of water, allowing it to naturally filter and absorb into the ground.

### **Green Roofs**

Green roofs are innovative architectural features that introduce vegetation to the rooftops of buildings. They serve a dual purpose – enhancing urban aesthetics and contributing to effective stormwater management. Restoration and remediation professionals assist in assessing the structural integrity of buildings, and ensure proper installation and maintenance of the vegetative roofing system.



By using specialized growth mediums, green roofs absorb and retain rainwater, reducing the overall volume of water runoff. They collect between 40% and 80% of rainwater and release it slowly. Green roofs also act as natural insulators, improving energy efficiency and air quality, and reducing the urban heat island effect.

### **Rain Gardens**

Rain gardens – or bioretention areas – are landscaped areas specifically designed to capture and manage stormwater runoff. These aesthetically pleasing features utilize a variety of native plants and specially engineered soil to absorb, filter, and slow down the flow of rainwater.

They help reduce flooding by allowing water to percolate into the ground, minimizing the burden on conventional drainage systems. Beyond their flood control benefits, rain gardens also enhance urban biodiversity and provide habitats for wildlife, creating green pockets within city landscapes.

### **Bioswales**

Bioswales are engineered landscape features designed to channel and manage water runoff effectively. These vegetated channels or ditches are typically lined with vegetation and soil engineered to capture and treat rainwater as it flows.

By filtering out pollutants and allowing water to infiltrate the ground, bioswales reduce the burden on stormwater infrastructure and prevent urban flooding. They are pivotal in enhancing water quality and promoting a more sustainable approach to urban water management.

### **Rainwater Harvesting**

Rainwater harvesting has gained prominence as a sustainable solution to stormwater management in urban areas. The collected water can be used for irrigation, toilet flushing and cooling systems. By diminishing the volume of stormwater entering conventional drainage systems, rainwater harvesting alleviates the strain on infrastructure and conserves freshwater resources.





### **Urban Tree Canopies**

Urban tree canopies comprise the network of trees within urban environments, offering several significant benefits, including stormwater management. Trees are critical in reducing the risk of flooding by absorbing rainwater and releasing it back into the atmosphere through transpiration.

Moreover, they provide shade, which cools urban areas and decreases evaporation rates. By expanding and preserving urban tree canopies, cities can enhance their resilience to extreme weather events while improving air quality.

### **Permeable Pavement**

Permeable pavement is a pioneering solution to urban flood control that transforms traditional impervious surfaces into permeable ones. These surfaces allow rainwater to infiltrate through the pavement and into the ground below, thus reducing runoff and preventing flooding.

They can take various forms, such as porous concrete, pavers or asphalt – each offering a resilient and efficient way to address stormwater management in urban areas. By replacing conventional roads, parking lots and sidewalks with permeable alternatives, cities can drastically reduce the risk of flooding and improve water quality through the natural filtration of pollutants.

### **Green Streets**

Also known as eco-friendly or sustainable streets, green streets are an effective stormwater management tool. Key features include using permeable pavements, strategically planted trees, and the integration of bioswales and rain gardens, combining multiple green technologies.

This multifaceted approach allows green streets to capture and filter rainwater, curbing the volume of runoff that can lead to flooding. In addition to their flood control benefits, they improve air quality, urban cooling and aesthetic enhancements, transforming urban environments into more sustainable and pleasant places for residents to live and work.

**"One of the most promising developments in urban stormwater management is incorporating green infrastructure. This strategy aims to restore natural hydrological processes within urban areas."**

### **Underground Storage and Detention Systems**

In highly developed urban areas with limited space for green infrastructure, underground storage and detention systems provide an effective alternative. These systems consist of underground tanks or chambers designed to store excess stormwater.

By temporarily holding water during heavy rainfall, they prevent downstream flooding and can slowly release it when the storm has passed. This controlled release of water reduces the pressure on drainage systems and minimizes the risk of urban flooding.

### **WaterGate Rapid Solution**

WaterGate is a versatile and rapidly deployable flood barrier system. During flooding, its innovative design allows companies to install it quickly to protect critical infrastructure and homes. The barrier consists of lightweight, modular elements that one can easily assemble, providing an effective defense against rising waters.

Whether used to secure access points, shore up embankments or protect vulnerable areas, WaterGate offers a flexible and scalable solution to urban flood control. Its adaptability and rapid deployment capabilities make it a valuable tool for mitigating the immediate impacts of flooding, and reducing damage to both public and private property.

### **Smart Stormwater Management**

The digital age has brought a wealth of opportunities for more efficient stormwater management. Smart systems use advanced sensors, data analytics, and real-time monitoring to predict and respond to storm events.

These systems can autonomously adjust water levels in storage tanks, control water flow, and provide early warnings to relevant authorities and residents. By optimizing stormwater management in this way, one can mitigate the impact of heavy rains more effectively.

### **Flood Guards**

Flood guards are a state-of-the-art fluid monitoring and prediction system that provides timely and accurate information during potential floods. A flood guard continuously monitors weather conditions, river levels and other critical parameters, and is equipped with a network of sensors and advanced data analytics.

When adverse weather patterns indicate an increased risk of flooding, the system issues early warnings to relevant authorities and communities, allowing them to implement precautionary measures and evacuate residents if necessary. This proactive approach to flood management is invaluable in reducing property damage, protecting lives and enhancing the overall resilience of urban areas.

## Preparation

In emergency response situations, it is always important to ensure adequate preparation. Creating emergency action plans, implementing advanced early warning systems, developing evacuation plans, and maintaining stockpiles of emergency resources can help ensure individuals and communities are better prepared in the event of a storm.

Additionally, a utility trailer can be a valuable tool in an emergency situation. These trailers are purpose-built to transport essential supplies and equipment to affected areas swiftly, effectively turning them into a lifeline for disaster-stricken communities. However, it's important to select aluminum over steel trailers, as steel is vulnerable to water exposure and has a tendency to rust.

## Resilient Infrastructure

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of storms, making it essential for cities to adopt resilient infrastructure. Modular systems – which one can adapt and expand – provide cities with the flexibility to adjust to changing storm patterns and growing urban populations.

By embracing resilient infrastructure, cities can reduce the long-term costs associated with stormwater management and enhance their ability to control urban flooding.

## Urban Planning and Design

Effective stormwater management starts with adequate urban planning and design. Forward-thinking city planners are incorporating stormwater management into their plans from the outset, integrating green spaces, sustainable drainage systems and flood-resistant infrastructure into the urban landscape. By doing so, they're not only mitigating the effects of stormwater but also creating more livable, sustainable cities.

These advanced stormwater management solutions offer resilient, sustainable and highly effective ways to address urban water challenges. By combining and customizing these techniques to fit the specific needs of a given urban environment, stormwater professionals can help mitigate the adverse impacts of urbanization, and protect lives and property during extreme weather events.

## Adopting Innovative Solutions for Stormwater Management

Increasing numbers of people are living in cities nowadays. Unfortunately, most of the structures they currently live in were not built in a time when effectively draining flood water was essential. Urbanization may bring about numerous challenges, but it also serves as a catalyst for innovation.

Cities worldwide are actively seeking new and sustainable ways to deal with flooding and protect their residents. A team of professionals bring their expertise in assessing water damage, implementing green infrastructure measures and ensuring compliance with stormwater management regulations in order for these solutions to be effective.

By embracing cutting-edge solutions, urban areas can adapt to climate change's challenges and enhance the overall quality of life.

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**Oscar Collins** is the editor-in-chief of [Modded](#). Follow him on Twitter [@TModded](#) for frequent updates of his work.

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1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

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## Putting Yourself in the Consumers Shoes

By Mylendra Ingram

In the restoration and remediation industry, it's easy to get caught up in the technical aspects of the job - assessing damage, implementing solutions, and restoring properties to their original state. However, it is equally important to remember the consumer's perspective throughout the entire process, and to remember that in some aspect we are all consumers as well. By understanding the consumer's needs, concerns, and expectations, restoration professionals can provide a more empathetic and satisfactory experience for their customers.

The following topics highlights the significance of remembering the consumer standpoint in the restoration and remediation industry and offer insights on how to prioritize their needs.

**Building Trust through Clear Communication:** One of the key factors in remembering the consumer standpoint is establishing trust. Clear and effective communication is vital in ensuring that customers feel informed and involved throughout the restoration process. By explaining the steps involved, addressing their questions and concerns, and providing regular updates, restoration professionals can build trust and alleviate any anxieties the consumer may have.

**Empathy and Understanding:** Disasters and property damage can be emotionally distressing for consumers. It is crucial for restoration professionals to approach each situation with empathy and understanding. By acknowledging the emotional impact of the situation, restoration experts can provide a more compassionate and supportive experience. This can be achieved through active listening, showing empathy, and offering reassurance to the consumer.

**Timeliness and Efficiency:** In the restoration and remediation industry, time is of the essence. Consumers expect timely and efficient service to minimize the disruption caused by property damage. By prioritizing quick response times and efficient restoration processes, professionals can demonstrate their commitment to meeting consumer expectations. This includes promptly assessing the damage, providing accurate timelines, and delivering on promises made.

**Quality Workmanship and Attention to Detail:** Consumers want their properties to be restored to their pre-damage condition, if not better. Restoration professionals should focus on delivering high-quality workmanship and paying attention to detail. By ensuring that every aspect of the restoration process is handled meticulously, professionals can exceed consumer expectations and leave a lasting positive impression.

**Post-Restoration Support:** The consumer's journey does not end once the restoration process is complete. Offering post-restoration support, such as follow-up inspections, maintenance advice, and warranties, can provide consumers with peace of mind. By going the extra mile to ensure customer satisfaction, restoration professionals can build long-term relationships and foster positive word-of-mouth referrals.

In the restoration and remediation industry, remembering the consumer standpoint is crucial for providing exceptional service. By prioritizing clear communication, empathy, timeliness, quality workmanship, and post-restoration support, professionals can create a positive and memorable experience for their customers. Ultimately, by putting themselves in the consumer's shoes, restoration experts can build trust, exceed expectations, and establish themselves as trusted partners in times of distress.





# Assessing Water Damage: Insurance Companies' Struggle

By Joshua Rudin

Working with insurance companies can be a challenge no matter what kind of disaster a property is facing, but when it comes to the safety of a job site, the categories of water damage become a major concern for residential or commercial properties, and those working on the project too.

It will always be the job of the insurance company to find the most cost-effective way of solving a problem, and sometimes that means they can erroneously or intentionally miss-categorize different forms of water intrusion. When this happens, both the safety of the clients, and that of the specialists hired to repair the damage are all jeopardized.

## What Are the Water Damage Categories?

Water damage is typically categorized into three primary categories based on the source and nature of the water. These categories are:

**Category 1** (Clean Water): This category involves water from a clean and sanitary source, such as broken water supply lines or faucets. It poses no substantial risk to human health if handled promptly.

**Category 2** (Gray Water): Gray water contains contaminants that can potentially cause discomfort or illness if ingested by humans. It includes water from dishwashers, washing machines, or sump pump failures.

**Category 3** (Black Water): The most severe category, black water is highly contaminated and poses significant health risks. It includes sewage backups, floodwaters, or water from natural disasters too.

## Insurance Provider Challenges in Categorizing Water Damage

Despite this seemingly straightforward classification, insurance companies face several challenges when assessing the categorization of water damage. These challenges stem from the dynamic nature of water-related incidents, and a lack of understanding or training on the part of the insurance adjuster, agent, or representatives.

Water can find its way into a various types of properties in several different ways, and sometimes those pathways can get mixed together making it a challenge to determine the original source of the contamination for insurance providers. This is where seasoned professionals, such as restoration specialists can help to guide the assessments for the most accurate categorization.

**"It will always be the job of the insurance company to find the most cost-effective way of solving a problem, and sometimes that means they can erroneously or intentionally miss-categorize different forms of water intrusion."**

### Unknown Sources

Determining the precise source of water damage can be challenging for an insurance adjuster or insurance company representatives in general, but when multiple potential sources exist, these difficulties become compounded and amplified. A seemingly clean category one water leak might originate from an uncontaminated source within the building structure, and then encounter category three contamination along the way.

complicating the categorization process. These inaccurate judgements can put both the clients and the restoration professionals in harm's way if not correctly addressed.

### **Delayed Discovery**

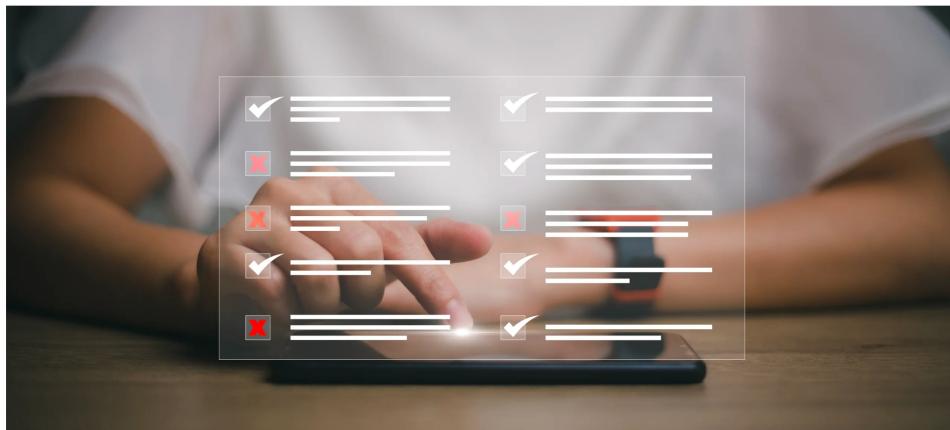
Water damage is not always immediately apparent. Sometimes leaks can happen in small quantities, intermittently, or in a variety of other ways that don't materialize in a readily noticeable manner. Hidden leaks behind walls or in crawl spaces may go undetected indefinitely, and this can alter the accuracy of any categorization efforts.

Delayed discovery through inaccurate assessments and miss-categorization can ultimately increase the scope of the loss significantly as well as the potential dangers faced by clients and restoration professionals. By the time the source of damage becomes more evident, the water may have undergone changes, or encountered various sources of contamination that then make categorization more challenging.

### **Changing Conditions**

Water conditions can and usually will evolve over short periods of time. Clean water will almost always become contaminated if left untreated, and what initially appears as gray water can escalate to black water scenarios due to microbial growth and other contaminating factors.

A leak that happens from a pipe issue in the hallway may eventually flood into the bathroom and encounter further contamination where it goes from a category one scenario to a category three situation and still looks like the same water that started the problem.



### **Subjectivity and Ethics when Assessing Water Categorization**

When it comes to the accurate assessment of water damage categories, there are several different issues that clients and restoration professionals face at the hands of inaccurate judgements from insurance company adjusters, agents, and representative staff.

Adjusters, agents, and other insurance company representative staff can make erroneous assessments when it comes to these scenarios because of many different factors, most are innocuous and understandable, while others are elevated ethical issues that unnecessarily put people and lives at risk simply for financial gain.

### **Assessor Expertise**

The accuracy of water damage categorization relies heavily on the expertise and training of the assessors. Not all insurance claims adjusters, agents and other representatives within the organization are educated in mold contamination, or even water damage categories for that matter, and this knowledgebase or lack-there-of can be the source of some consternation.

Insurance company representatives, restoration professionals, and sub-contractors may interpret the same situation differently, leading to discrepancies in water categorization. The issue arises when those who have to live and work in the space are adversely affected by this categorization when it is inaccurate.

### **Technological Limitations**

While technology has advanced in the field of water damage restoration, there is still a lack of universally adopted, standardized advanced detection methods. This lack of standardization across the board can hinder the ability of the assessor to precisely identify the water's origin and categorization accurately.

Instead, representatives rely on their knowledge and skillsets to make an on-site determination which may have questionable accuracy. This lack of data and understanding can put both the property owner and the restoration professionals at risk through contamination.

### **Financial Implications**

Inaccurate categorization can lead to financial repercussions for both clients and restoration professionals too. Unanticipated secondary damage, mold growth, or health issues may result in higher claims payouts, and whenever money is involved in this process the ethical considerations may take a back seat for those less reputable providers.

When this occurs, both clients and the restoration professionals' pocketbooks are affected, but also, and more importantly, their health and safety too! An accurate categorization of the higher levels of water damage means that the insurance provider will be forced to pay out more in claims, and this can cause them to misdiagnose the ultimate nature of the issue.



Misjudging the water damage category can expose individuals to unnecessary health and safety risks through bacteriological, viral, pathogenic or chemical contamination.

Improper handling of tainted water could lead to serious health issues and diseases as well as to exacerbate property damage issues over time.

Getting the most accurate understanding of what water category a property is facing will make the lives and jobs of everyone involved in the restoration process much easier and safer. When insurance adjusters, agents and other insurance company staff assess a property inaccurately this leads to more demolition, more reconstruction, higher costs, potential health and safety risks, and missed expectations for everyone throughout the process.

### Adjusting the Adjuster – Final Thoughts on Inaccurate Categorization

Accurate categorization of water damage is clearly a challenge for insurance adjusters, agents, and other representative staff, given the dynamic nature of water-related incidents and the potential for the bending of ethics for financial gain.

The complexities associated with source ambiguity, changing conditions over time, human subjectivity, and technological limitations contribute to the difficulty in achieving pinpoint accuracy when it comes to water damage categorization.

"One way to put everyone on the same page is to walk a mile in each other's shoes. When a false categorization occurs with one of our projects, I like to ask a simple question 'Would you let your baby crawl on the floor and then insert their fingers in their mouth?' If the answer is no, then a re-categorization is necessary, and there usually isn't an argument about it at that point."

As the restoration and construction industries evolve, a concerted effort towards adopting advanced detection technologies, standardized protocols, and improved data integration can pave the way for more precise water damage categorization assessments.

Addressing the challenges claims adjusters face when categorizing water damage will not only help streamline the claims process but also contribute to the overall financial integrity of the industry from an ethical standpoint.

Ultimately, the more accurate a water categorization is, the safer the property owner and the restoration professionals working in these environments will be!

**Joshua Rudin** is the Owner of ASAP Restoration, LLC and a Certified Restorer. Before opening in 2008, Joshua was a successful entrepreneur in the restaurant industry owning and running several thriving locations for more than two decades. To reach Joshua, visit [AsapRestoration247.com](http://AsapRestoration247.com), call 602-515-7918, or email [jrudin@asaprestoration247.com](mailto:jrudin@asaprestoration247.com)



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# You Could Get a College Degree in Water Restoration!

By Larry Cooper

## Restoration Industry Changes and Growth

The Restoration Industry has seen many changes in my 50 years of industry experience. When I started in the industry there was no written training programs, there was no classroom training programs, and there was no industry specific guidelines or drying equipment available.

In the 80's IICRC and RIA started programs, classes, and certifications for water damage restoration. These programs have grown and evolved over the years, but what we all have been wondering about is how to attract the interest of young people into the industry and help grow our businesses.



I was recently honored to speak at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) on a program hosted by MTSU & Business Networks and Les Cunningham about the Restoration Industry. While I was at the University, I experienced the new School of Concrete and Construction Management. What an amazing learning facility.

Then I learned that MTSU is planning to open and expand a 4-year degree program in Construction Management with an emphasis on Water Damage Restoration. Finally, a new level of education and training will be available for our industry to continue its growth and bring college level students into our industry.

The Restoration Industry Management Idea Grew from a need in working in Family Business in Restoration, Employee Burnout in Restoration, and Estimator Burnout in Restoration. Surveys were conducted and an industry advisory board was established to form a degree concentration, including curriculum texts, learning resources and equipment.



The advisory board also has worked on scholarship funding, campus engagement and restoration industry events. The school is now up and running and it is looking for the Restoration Industry to step up and assist the Future of Education in our Industry.

Finally, we can imagine a higher level of education and commitment for our industry. I have been talking about Raising the Bar in our Industry and this is a great step in the right direction.

**The Restoration Degree has 5 areas of emphasis that are semester long programs. These areas include:**

- **Restoration Industry Science and Practices**
- **EMS & Mitigation Estimating**
- **Structural & Catastrophe Estimating**
- **Restoration Project Management**
- **Restoration Industry Internship**

The program costs approximately \$7.5 million over 3 years. Now this is where the Restoration Industry gets involved: We should consider contributing to the program. Funding from our industry would pay for staff and program administration directly. The restoration and remediation industry is being asked to fund up to \$3 million over 5 years to uplift the industry. The University is funding over \$4.5 million to facilitate the launch of the program.

Now is the restoration and remediation chance to step and really raise the bar and help start this program and then look to expand this program into other states around the USA. The University also stepped up and will match your donation at 75% level of your donation. So, you donate \$10,000 and the university will match \$7500.

The incredible additional information you need to know is that 100% of the funding will go directly to the department not to administration of the program.

Now it's your turn, Call Dr. Jake Avila at MTSU at 615-898-5715 or Les Cunningham with Business Networks at 541-729-7272 and get involved or get more information. This is a great opportunity for our industry. Get INVOLVED...

**Larry Cooper**, Restoration Journeys and founder of The Experience Events



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# Buyers' Guide

The #1 directory of professional restorers and remediaters, insurance claim professionals, property managers and distributors. Our resources included suppliers, associations, and products such as chemicals for disinfectants, carpet cleaning and spot removal as well as water extraction equipment and smoke damage repair products. The Restoration & Remediation directory is designed to provide you with sources for these important products & resources. Below is a sampling of some of the companies featured in this year's directory. We invite you to reference the supplier logos below and click on them to learn more about each company's offerings.

Plus, be sure to visit (and bookmark!) our easy-to-use [online directory here](#).



\*Distributor and Supplier logos represent paid advertising. If you are a distributor or supplier and would like to receive information regarding your company's inclusion online and in future editions, contact Renee Schuett at [schuett@bnpmedia.com](mailto:schuett@bnpmedia.com) or (248) 786-1661.



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