



The 2024
R&R 360
INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

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MOLD

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WATER DAMAGE

Majority of contractors provide water damage services coming in at 79 percent. Within the past five years, over one quarter of homeowners have had water restoration services.

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Utilizing Outsourcing to Optimize Business Growth

Outsourcing services can be a strategic decision for restoration contractors looking to optimize their operations and drive business growth. By entrusting specialized tasks to external partners, contractors can focus on their core competencies, improve operational efficiency, and increase customer satisfaction.

Here are some key considerations when exploring outsourcing services for restoration contractors:

Specialized Expertise: Outsourcing allows restoration contractors to tap into the specialized knowledge and skills of professionals in areas such as mold remediation, water damage restoration, and fire damage cleanup. This can lead to higher-quality work and better outcomes for clients.

Cost-Effectiveness: By outsourcing certain tasks, contractors can save on hiring, training, and equipment costs. External partners can often deliver services at a lower cost due to economies of scale and specialized expertise, helping contractors increase their profitability.

Scalability: Outsourcing services enables restoration contractors to quickly scale up or down based on project demands. This flexibility is especially valuable during busy seasons or when facing large projects that require additional manpower and resources.

Improved Focus: Outsourcing non-core activities like data entry, customer service, or administrative tasks allows contractors to concentrate on their primary objectives and strategic initiatives. This can lead to enhanced productivity, innovation, and business growth.

Risk Management: Working with reputable outsourcing partners can help mitigate risks associated with complex restoration projects. External vendors with industry certifications and insurance coverage can ensure compliance with regulations and industry best practices, reducing liability for contractors.

Enhanced Customer Service: Outsourcing services can help restoration contractors improve customer satisfaction by providing faster response times, better communication, and higher-quality work. This can result in increased customer loyalty and positive referrals, driving business success.

Outsourcing services offer restoration contractors numerous benefits, including access to specialized expertise, cost savings, scalability, improved focus, risk management, and enhanced customer service. By leveraging external resources strategically, contractors can achieve operational excellence, competitive advantage, and sustainable growth in the restoration industry.

Myldred Ingram

Myldred Ingram
R&R Editor-in-chief

R&R 360

Giving the Industry a complete guide to Restoration, Remediation and Cleaning Trends

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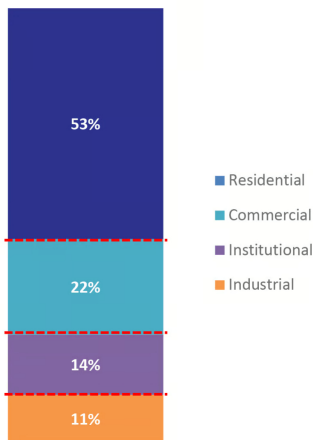
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R&R Presents its 2024 R&R 360 OUTLOOK

Over the years, Restoration and Remediation Magazine has brought the industry a summary of what has happened over the last year in our industry, as well as trends to keep an eye on. As a new initiative, we have changed the name of the report from "The State of The Industry," to "The R&R 360 Industry Report." Previous studies, and speaking with industry professionals at various trade shows, has taught us that adding the perspective of the homeowner could help build better business practices and potentially help restoration contractors profit financially providing a comprehensive view of the market landscape.

Uniquely, this year, a panel of four industry leaders to do a further dive into the key findings and more joined Restoration and Remediation Magazine in an exclusive, thought provoking webinar. These key findings include finding skilled workers, followed by increased supply costs, and the current economy/inflation.

Average Share of Business Applications¹
(n=304)



The Contractor

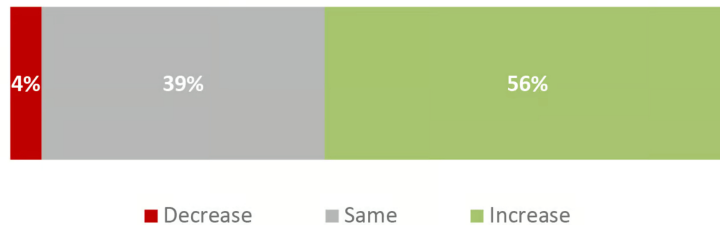
Consistent to our findings in 2022, half of respondents are primarily involved with remodeling contracting, while just under one-fifth are involved with water damage restoration contracting. Median company revenue is between \$1 million and \$4.9 million. The majority of respondent companies provide water restoration services, followed by mold remediation, fire/smoke damage restoration, cleaning and disinfection, and odor removal.

The majority of contractors are independent and serve in management roles; about three-fifths approve or authorize purchases for their company.

Most respondents are optimistic about the business going forward. Fifty six percent of respondents estimate that business revenue from restoration and remediation projects will increase in the future. Residential contractors are especially enthusiastic about growth potential for their business, with 53 percent of respondents expecting an increase. Twenty-two percent of commercial contractors expect an increase, with 14 percent of institutional contractors seeing an increase.

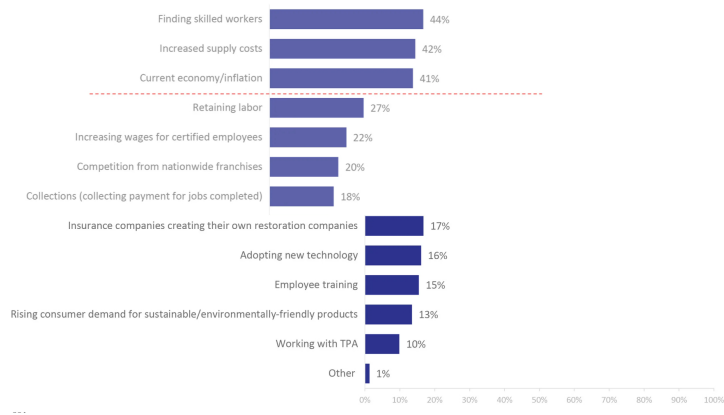
On average, over half of contractors' business is generated from residential projects. More than half of contractors predict an increase in revenue from restoration and remediation work in 2024 compared to last year.

Estimated Year-Over-Year Change in Revenue from Cleaning & Restoration/Remediation Services²
(n=275)



Finding Skilled Workers/ Training

For the past 2 years, the largest perceived challenge in the industry is finding skilled workers. This year Restoration & Remediation sent out a questionnaire covering a range of topics affecting the restoration business, again with a 360 view from both contractors and homeowners. These included hiring and retention, sustainability initiatives etc. from the contractor's perspective, to methods of seeking out restoration work and purchase decision factors for the homeowner.



Contractors report spending an average of 33 percent of last year's budget on labor.

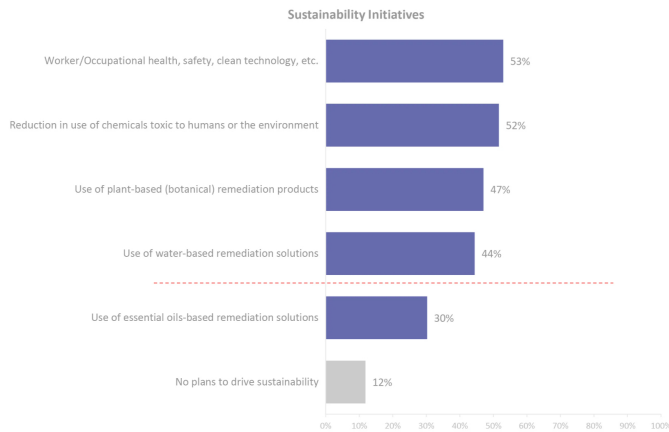
Companies employ a mix of full-time, part-time and contract employees. More than half of contractors report no change in staffing level across the board over the past year; however, two-in-five report an increase in subcontractors.

This could be because of the current worker retention. About half of contractors have worked at their current company for over 10 years. The majority of contractors see a path to advance in their career and company. In three years, the majority of contractors not only continue to see themselves in the restoration industry but also with their current company.

Even with companies retaining the same employees for over 10 years and implementing retention initiatives such as increasing employees' pay/awarding bonuses to increase that retention. Finding properly "skilled" employees, again, remains to be a major challenge.

During the R&R 360 industry panel discussion panelist were asked why they believe this is; the conversation of training became one of the main points. Executive Vice President of NORMI Lance Eisen, one of the four industry expert panelist stated that training workers to meet the expectation of the customer is the key.

Studies have shown that the majority of contractors believe it is highly important to provide quality staff training. An average of 14 percent of company annual budgets spent are on training. Hands-on training is the top preferred training method of technical competency, followed by on-site field training. Notably, training is within the top five methods of employee retention, a consistent factor in the restoration industry.



Another key finding during this study is sustainability initiatives, the majority of contractor companies plan to drive sustainability, with over half planning to do so by ensuring worker safety and reducing toxic chemical usage; a topic that spills into another area of interest; Inflation and supply chain demand, another one of the biggest challenges for restorers over the past year.

Planned purchases for the next 12 months estimate at an average of about three categories of chemical/products purchased and four categories of equipment/services purchased. On average respondents spent 14 percent on restoration equipment, and 15 percent on remediation chemicals.

The Homeowner

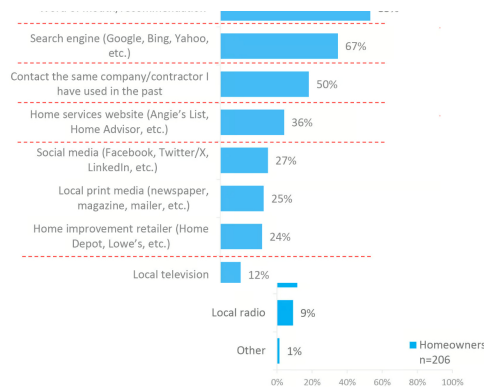
As aforementioned, this year's findings have an extra boost of bettering your restoration business as it includes the perspective of the homeowner. During the R&R 360 panel discussion, Doug Hoffman Founder and director of NORMI stated that often times there is a disconnect between what restorers think a homeowner wants and needs vs what they're actually thinking and wanting when hiring business.

The majority of respondents (70%) were male. Baby Boomers made up the biggest age group with 45 percent of respondents born between 1946 and 1965.

Homeowners indicate they are most likely to seek out a cleaning, restoration and remediation Company via word of mouth, followed by search engines and contacting previous companies.

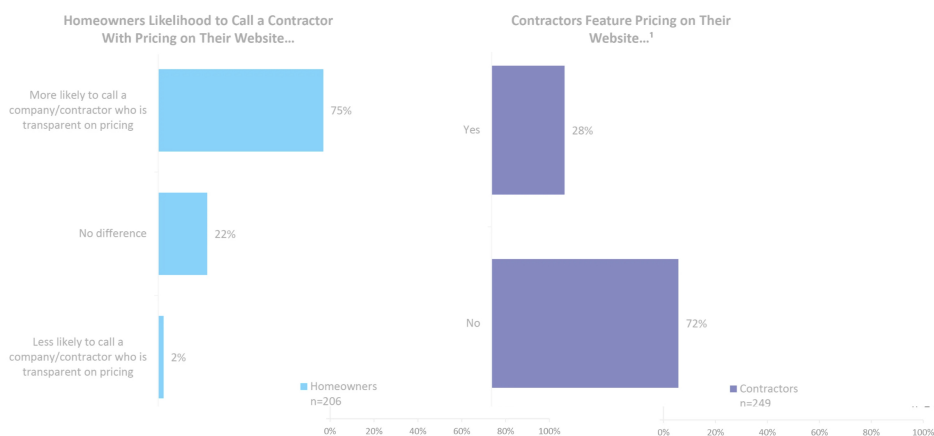
Similarly, Contractors' main method of promotion is word of mouth. Contractors are also highly likely to be advertising via social media, but that is a relatively low method for Homeowners.





While social media may not be the preferred method of acquiring services for homeowners, online reviews are highly important ranking high at 72 percent. Most Contractors are featuring their own reviews from previous customers on their websites.

Comparatively, Three-quarters of Homeowners are more likely to call a contractor with pricing on their website, but only over one-quarter of Contractors currently feature pricing on their website.



To Fee or not To Fee

Homeowners are less likely to get a quote from a contractor who would charge a fee for an evaluation visit. The maximum fee Homeowners would be willing to pay is around 40\$, on average. Nearly one-third of Contractors indicate they currently charge an assessment visit fee. Contractors report they charge a fee much higher than homeowner expectations at about 395\$ on average. Panelist Anthony Nelson Group Facilitator for Pivot My Biz says, charging could very well be a positive toll helping restorers find their ideal client.

The most important factors to Homeowners when selecting a cleaning, restoration or remediation company/contractor are contractor reputation coming in at 90 percent followed by company licensing/bonding, contractor experience, contractor licensing, and quality of materials/equipment.



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RADON:
Sources, Testing
Parameters, Brush
and Mitigation
Strategies
By Richard Wertz



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RADON LEVEL

RADON: Sources, Testing Parameters, Brush and Mitigation Strategies

By Brandon White

Disclaimer: The following is not intended to be a user's guide or exhaustive explanation of the subject matter. Radon, industrial hygiene sampling, and mitigation are complex subjects, best handled by professionals with sufficient education and training.

Radon, a radioactive, noble gas and well-documented human carcinogen, presents a significant health hazard as the second leading cause of lung cancer resulting in an estimated 21,000 deaths each year in the United States alone (American Lung Association, 2024). This invisible, odorless, tasteless, gas permeates homes and buildings through foundation cracks and other planned and non-planned openings. Due to the serious health implications of radon exposure, understanding radon sources, testing methodologies and mitigation strategies is critical for restoration professionals.

Sources of Radon in Soil: In the U.S., radon concentration in soil varies widely due to geological differences. Radon typically originates from soils rich in uranium and radium. These elements are found naturally occurring predominantly in certain geological formations such as granite, phosphate, shale, and pitchblende (U.S. Geological Survey, n.d.).

Geology, Soil Composition, and Decay: The primary source of radon is the decay of uranium and thorium, which occurs in varying quantities in different soil and rock types (Stanley et al., 2019). Uranium decays into radium and then into radon forming different isotopes such as radon-222 and radon-220 (Stanley et al., 2019). An isotope is an atom with an unequal number of protons and neutrons. The number of protons remains the same; however, when an atom gains or loses a neutron, it becomes an isotope. In radon-222 and radon-220, each atom has gained neutrons making it an isotope. On the periodic table of elements, radon is element 86 meaning that it has 86 protons. The mass of an atom is due primarily to the number of protons and neutrons contained in the nucleus. For example, an isotope of radon-222 has 86 protons, and 136 neutrons giving it a mass of 222; therefore, it is referred to as radon-222.

During the radioactive decay of radon-222, alpha, beta, and gamma radiation is emitted. These three types of radiation have differing levels of energy with gamma being the most energetic and having the potential to cause the most harm (EPA, 2023a). Radiation can cause ionization of biological systems and cause damage to DNA leading to mutations and potentially cancer (EPA, 2023a).



Soil Permeability: Radon migration through soil depends on soil permeability. Soil with high porosity, such as sand or rocky soil, allows radon to move more freely compared to dense soil such as clay.

Mitigation Content: Mitigation in soil requires the extraction of water by either the use of soil moisture extraction

Moisture Content: Moisture in soil can impede the migration of radon by filling the pores in soil thereby reducing its diffusion into the atmosphere or building foundations.

Alternative Sources of Radon: Apart from geological sources, radon can enter the indoor air through several sources such as the domestic water supply, radon-containing building materials, and household appliances that generate radon (Abed et al., 2024).

The Role of the Building Envelope: The building envelope can significantly influence indoor radon levels. Tight building envelopes, designed for energy efficiency, often have reduced ventilation, which can trap radon inside. Cracks in foundations, gaps around pipes, and construction joints are typical entry points for radon. Homes with basements or those built on slab foundations are particularly susceptible.

Testing Parameters for Radon: Effective radon testing is crucial for assessing potential risks. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends testing all homes below the third floor, especially in radon-prone areas. There are currently 16 methods identified by the EPA for the detection and quantification of radon (National Radon Proficiency Program, 2024). Common tests such as the short-term and long-term or time integrated sampling are routinely conducted giving an average concentration of radon over time. Restorers should consider hiring a qualified industrial hygienist given the complexity of radon sampling and the potential health implications.

Short-term Testing: Historically short-term testing has been widely used in the U.S. This method involves the use of activated charcoal or electret ion detectors, typically left in place for 2-7 days. Ambient radon levels can fluctuate from day to day affecting the accuracy of a short-term test. Ventilation rates and temperature changes can dramatically affect ambient radon levels. Consequently, recent studies have shown short-term radon tests can be up to 96-99% inaccurate compared to long-term testing (Stanley et al., 2019).

Long-term Testing: Alpha track detectors or continuous radon monitors are used for long-term testing and can be used spanning 90 days to one year. Long-term tests provide a more accurate representation of average radon levels by mitigating short-term fluctuations.

Test Placement: For accurate results, the American National Standard Institute / American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists / Measurement of Air in Homes (ANSI/AARST MAH 2019) protocol should be followed when testing for radon in residential settings. This standard can be purchased from the online ANSI web store. Test devices should be placed in the lowest occupied or livable area of the building, away from drafts, high humidity, and exterior walls. The ideal placement is at least 20 inches above the floor, in a centrally located room, at least three feet from the planned openings and at least one foot away from exterior walls. Samples should not be placed in rooms with a potential for high humidity such as bathrooms and laundry rooms. Special consideration should be given to the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system of the building, such as how many units there are and the frequency of use (ANSI/AARST, 2019).

Mitigation Strategies: The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) has created international standards to aid in radon mitigation. ASTM E1465 establishes options for the design and construction of residential buildings concerning radon control. ASTM E2121 addresses the installation of radon mitigation systems. When elevated radon levels are detected, implementing mitigation strategies is essential to reduce exposure. The EPA action level for radon is 4 picocuries per liter [pCi/L] (EPA, HUD, NIH, OSHA, 2015). There is currently no known safe level of radon exposure defined; therefore, the EPA recommends mitigation when radon is found at 2pCi/L or more (EPA, 2023b). The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA, 2021) regulation permissible exposure limit for radon is 100pCi/L for the 40-hour time weighted average. It is important to note that OSHA regulations apply to occupational exposure thus different testing parameters apply. Occupational exposure is an important parameter concerning radon, but it is not the focus of this article. The average ambient radon level is 1.25pCi/L indoors and approximately one in fifteen homes is estimated to have ambient radon levels above the EPA action level making radon a widespread health hazard of major concern. The EPA developed The National Radon Action Plan (TNRAP), a framework for reducing radon risk. The American Lung Association is currently leading this action plan. The TNRAP is one way that agencies are working to reduce risk and lower the incidence of radon mortality (EPA, 2024).

Radon Reduction Systems: Also known as, sub-slab depressurization, this method involves inserting a pipe or pipes through a building's foundation to draw radon from beneath the home and exhausting it above the roofline. This technique is highly effective and commonly used in homes with basements or slab-on-grade foundations. Care must be taken to ensure that the radon is exhausted appropriately to avoid re-entrainment or being brought back into the building.

Sealing Cracks and Openings: While not sufficient as a standalone mitigation tactic, sealing foundation cracks and other openings reduces the inflow of radon and complements other mitigation techniques.

Ventilation: Increasing ventilation in crawl spaces and using heat recovery ventilators (HRVs) or energy recovery ventilators (ERVs) can help to dilute indoor ambient radon levels. In general, ventilation systems exchange indoor air with outdoor air, reducing radon concentration inside the home.

Pressurization: Active soil pressurization is achieved by using fans to create positive pressure in a building and can prevent radon from entering the home or reduce the amount of radon migration. The pressurization method is less common but can be effective in certain scenarios.

Conclusion

Radon is a ubiquitous and pervasive environmental hazard in the U.S., necessitating awareness and proactive management. Understanding the geological and alternative source variability of radon, coupled with effective testing and mitigation strategies, is vital for reducing health risks associated with this radioactive gas. Restoration professionals and industrial hygienists play a critical role in implementing these measures, ensuring homes and buildings remain safe from radon infiltration.

By prioritizing radon awareness, conducting accurate testing methods, and designing effective mitigation strategies, we can significantly reduce the associated health risks, fostering safer living environments nationwide.

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How to Handle Personal Belongings after Water Damage: A GUIDE FOR RESTORATION CONTRACTORS

By Annissa Coy

When water damage strikes a home, it's not just the structure that's affected—personal belongings often bear the brunt too. As a restoration contractor, you're not only tasked with fixing the damaged structure but also with handling these personal items with care. Here are some tips to help you navigate this sensitive aspect of your job.

Start With a Thorough Assessment and Create a Scope of Work

Begin by carefully inspecting the damaged areas. Document everything with photos, videos, and notes. There is a great program I like to use called Encircle. It is super user friendly and very powerful. This will be crucial for the insurance claim and keeping track of what needs attention and triaged right away to prevent further damage. This is especially important when dealing with water verses fire damage. And remember you always want to inventory all items and organize them by the room in your inventory software before you pack and move them out.

During this time, it is critical that you note any damages you find before the items are moved to protect yourself from liability. This could be very difficult as some items may be extremely damaged upon your arrival by the water loss itself. This is where a conversation with your client will help you set your clients expectations for success of restorability right from the beginning.

There may be some situations that warrant not removing the items from the structure, just removing them from the affected area. However it is still very important to photograph and inventory all items before packing them and moving them. This will protect you and your company from liability for either damages that may have been done in the water damage or prior damages to any items that were there before the loss.

Communicate Expectations Clearly with Your Client

This is a very potentially stressful time for your client so communicating with them and being transparent about what condition their personal belongings are in is one of the most important steps in your client onboarding process.

Sit down with them and explain the process. Remember this is the first time they have gone thru something like this potentially and life just flipped upside down for them. Let them know what to expect and how their belongings will be handled. Clear communication builds trust. Find out if the client has specific concerns or preferences, and give them all the time they need to ask questions to make sure they understand what is happening with their items.

Taking the time right at the beginning of the job to educate them will set the job up for success and eliminate a lot of stress for your client, which translates to a lot less stress for you.



Pack and Move Contents Out of Affected Areas

Gear up. Make sure your team is wearing the right personal protective gear, especially if dealing with contaminated water. Respirators, gloves, tyvek suit, safety glasses and rubber boots are all PPE that you may need. Safety first!

Use the right materials for packing. Use sturdy boxes, bubble wrap, and packing paper along with a system for labeling your boxes. You may need to pack some items in plastic bins depending on their condition and if they are soaking wet.

Move items to a safe, dry location on either the jobsite or offsite. Ensure that the storage area is climate-controlled to prevent any further damage. You may even need to freeze some items like books or papers. One of the big concerns with water damage is mold so the current weather conditions can have a big impact on your scope of work.

If you have wet textiles, you will need to handle those right away on your triage list to prevent color bleeding. Extracting water from them may be necessary before moving and be sure to put a piece of plastic down on top of the rug then roll it up to move so you don't have color bleed.

Once items are packed up, you need to separate the dry packed items from the wet handle ASAP items and prioritize those for processing first.

Clean and Restore Items

Non-porous items like glass, plastic, and metal can usually be cleaned and disinfected without much trouble. Make sure they are completely dry to avoid rust or mold. Porous items such as textiles, paper, and wood need special care. Decide if they can be dried and restored or if they need replacing and to be logged non-restorable.

Use equipment like dehumidifiers and air movers, and consider freeze-drying for books and paper items. For electronics, it's best to call in specialists unless you have the right equipment. Don't turn on any wet electronics to avoid short-circuiting. Often time's adjusters will just want you to log non-restorable these items if they have been sitting in water for safety reasons.

In some cases there maybe items that are unaffected by the water and we only have to pack them so they can be moved out of the affected areas. Be very careful to inspect these unaffected items to make sure they are not damp from just being in the affected areas and do they need to be dried out due to being in a humid environment too long.

Disposing of Non-Restorable Items

Evaluate which items are beyond saving. Document in your inventory software and explain this to your homeowner for their insurance claim. Offer to handle disposing of these items to take the load off the homeowner.

Once the non-restorable items have been determined and you have authorization from your homeowner to dispose of them remove them right away. Be sure you have a system in place to cover your legal responsibility and this can vary state to state or country.

Pack Back or Reset

Before returning items, ensure the home is completely dried, cleaned, and restored to prevent re-contamination. Carefully return items to their original or new designated spots. Ensure larger items like furniture are placed securely. Do a final walkthrough with the homeowner to make sure they're happy with the restoration and handling of their belongings. Address any concerns right away.

Keep your team updated with the latest techniques and best practices for handling contents and restoring them. Continuous learning ensures you provide the best service.

Handling personal belongings during a water damage restoration isn't just about being careful—it's about showing empathy and professionalism. By following these steps, you can ensure that homeowners feel their possessions are safe, giving them peace of mind during a tough time. Your commitment to excellence doesn't just restore homes; it helps rebuild lives.



Annissa Coy is a well-trained and highly skilled professional with more than two decades of experience in the cleaning and restoration industry and the co-creator of Firehouse Education and Mobile Cleaning Systems. She was also the winner of R&R's inaugural Recognizing Women in Restoration award in 2017. Be sure to check out Annissa's weekly videos on www.randrmagonline.com! Have a question for Annissa? E-mail her at Annissa@firehouseeducation.com.

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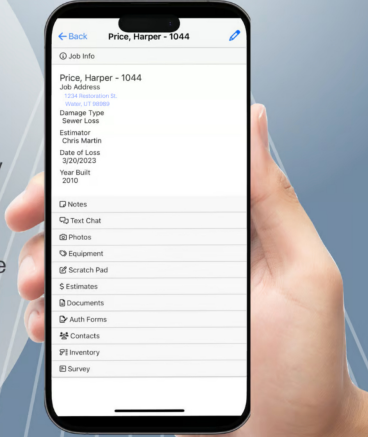
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WHAT IS A MYCOTOXIN?

It is a chemical poison, not a living organism that can be killed

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT MYCOTOXINS?

Restoration means taking care of buildings and people

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An End to Asbestos Use, But Does That End the Risk?

By Barry Rice

Photos: Getty Images

The R&R January 2023 Issue contained my article *Will Asbestos Ever Go Away?* In that article, I talked about the previous asbestos ban efforts, as well as the reality of asbestos materials in existing buildings. In my conclusion, I stated that the asbestos topic is not going away soon and the risks continue. (1)

Then on Monday, March 18, 2024 - the US Environmental Protection Agency announced a final rule to ban the ongoing uses of chrysotile asbestos, which is the only known use or import of asbestos in the United States. (2) Does this ban finally put the asbestos topic to rest and eliminate our risks?

Let me break this down further and explain where we are today.

Asbestos Ban!?!?

There have been multiple bans of asbestos by the US throughout the years. My January 2023 article mentions some of them and an online search will provide a huge amount of information. To summarize, there were bans in the '70s leading up to an overall ban in 1989. However, that was overturned in 1991. Other efforts followed until more recent federal efforts to further define the asbestos hazard. (3)

Despite these efforts, building materials with asbestos have continued to make their way into the country. Leading news agencies like the Washington Post, Forbes, and PBS all have reported that asbestos still makes its way into the United States. Even insurers like Chubb have warned that materials like drywall joint compound was still in use after a 1977 ban and the only way to be certain materials do not contain asbestos is to have them tested prior to removal. (Please refer to the Information Resources section at the end of the article for further information.)



What is Chrysotile Asbestos?

Let's jump forward to the March EPA announcement. It states that the only known current-day use or import of asbestos involves chrysotile asbestos. Asbestos is categorized into six types; Chrysotile is one of the most common types used. The previous asbestos bans stopped most uses of Chrysotile in building materials, but as mentioned asbestos use was not completely banned. This resulted in some manufacturers still importing and using Chrysotile asbestos in specialty products.





The March 2024 Ban

Please understand that this ban is very industry centric. In other words, it targets very specific industries and applications. The EPA announcement states that Chrysotile is used in industrial diaphragms, gaskets, brake linings, and of friction products. (2) It also gets quite complicated. For instance, the ban has specific timelines that allow different transition periods for different industries. Some industrial and federal gasket use has a five-year deadline, while others have a six-month window. Specialty asbestos diaphragms are to be phased out over five to 12 years, depending on the facility/application.

Good News/Bad News

Let's make this simpler without diving any deeper into the ban details.

First, the good news:

- Import of Chrysotile asbestos has been halted immediately.
- Phase-out periods of existing manufacturing have been put in place.
- Additional safety measures will be developed during the manufacturing phase-out.

Now the bad news:

There is still legacy asbestos in buildings!

For the restoration Industry, this ban doesn't remove the legacy asbestos hazard or relieve restoration companies from their obligation to protect employees and follow existing asbestos regulations!



“...this ban doesn't remove the legacy asbestos hazard or relieve restoration companies from their obligations to protect employees and follow existing asbestos regulations!”

I also have to admit my skepticism that asbestos building materials won't come into the US after the next large-scale disaster. Most of us remember the Chinese drywall issue in the mid-2000's after Hurricane Katrina depleted our domestic stockpile and outpaced production efforts. However, I'll put my skepticism aside and choose to focus on the good news bulleted items shown above!

More to Come

What about the other types of asbestos that I mentioned earlier? Well, there is a second part of the ban effort that will involve a risk evaluation of these other types. A draft version of that evaluation is to be released soon and a final version is due in early December 2024. (2) So, stay tuned!

Conclusion

I know there are restoration jobs with asbestos surveys that are still coming up positive for asbestos. Likewise, I have seen many old buildings being renovated that still have asbestos building materials in areas previously untouched. I'm sure there eventually will come a day when those buildings are either demolished or completely renovated. However, until that day an asbestos ban will not change the potential for asbestos exposure.

For the restoration Industry, I believe this ban can be summarized by stating "That's great news, but we still have to be vigilant about legacy asbestos."

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The Perils of Working on a Multi-Unit Building

By Kelley Dolan



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I have an embarrassing story to share. I live in an apartment building in Manhattan, and therefore, I am surrounded by a building structure that I don't own. As a long-term apartment dweller and a restoration professional for many years, I know how much time and energy is required when looking into structure issues. Perhaps it makes me slow to react.

In December, I watched as a spot on my kitchen ceiling got uglier and uglier. We had a lot going on at the time and I knew it wouldn't be a quick fix. I was also confident that it was a small leak and a bit of a delay wouldn't cause the ceiling to cave in. Then I noticed the spot start to darken and develop a point at the end that no longer looked like a paint bubble. Well, as you may have guessed already, one morning a full-on mushroom busted through! I wish I were writing an article about how I discovered a great new career in urban mushroom farming, but alas, that was not the career path I was on!

Yes, I know better, but it was bad timing. Opening up a ceiling is never quick, not to mention that multi-unit buildings come with an extra set of steps, which, frankly, can be hard on owners or renters to navigate, leading to poor or delayed choices ... like mine.

While I am sure that some of you are horrified by this story, I'm sharing it so you see that even someone who knows better can still hesitate to get things rolling. Living in a multi-unit building can be awesome, which is why so many of us do it, but it does come with complications that single-family homes don't have to consider.

As a restorer, before you go jumping into a multi-unit or multi-tenant space, be sure to get the lay of the land to understand who owns what and who gets to make which decisions. Below is a list of the least number of people you need to consider may be involved with just one unit in a multi-unit job. If you work in more than one unit, you will need to add in more people!

- Owner/Tenant of affected unit
- Owner/Tenant of surrounding unit(s)
- Building superintendent, building manager, or resident manager
- Building board—not an issue in a building consisting totally of rentals, but in co-ops or condos usually at least 1-2 people are involved in building work
- Property manager
- Building insurance adjuster
- Unit insurance adjuster(s)
- Plumber—usually hired by the building when a leak is truly a building leak

Multi-unit buildings have superintendents, boards, management companies, and other people living there. If the unit owner files a claim, the building probably will as well, resulting in two insurance companies showing up to the party. Therefore, a leak in the ceiling of my ground level unit means we need to get attention from at least 3-4 people before a plumber can even examine the problem, never mind fix the leak and then do the remediation. Oftentimes the biggest hurdle can be gaining access to other units just to find the leak.

Coordinating all these people can be the thing that drives a unit owner over the edge, and this may be where you can help the most. You may not need to insert yourself into the process right away, but offer guidance based on your experience of what they should focus on next in the process. You can offer that same guidance to the building representatives, along with explaining what you think is the safest and best course of action to reduce tenant disruption.

If you demonstrate knowledge and responsibility to the unit owner and building representatives, it is likely that you will impress all the people involved in that one job, and you will be the first call they make the next time something goes awry!

It is also important to consider that many smaller multi-unit buildings operate on small budgets and cannot float the cost of work. This often leads to an adversarial relationship between the unit owner and the party representing the building. The owner wants to move forward so they can get their fridge out of the living room,

while those representing the building may want to shop around or hire the most reasonably priced plumber on record, who will frequently have long lead times.

Restorers sometimes come into a project after things have been slowly moving forward for a few weeks. A unit owner, a building management company, or even the building entity could hire you. The bottom line is that you will want to know who is paying your bill. If a unit owner says, "My building is paying for this, because it is their leak" I suggest you verify that with someone representing the building. You always want to ask the property manager or board representative.

You work for who you are billing, but you also need to do the right job and keep all interested parties in the know. Communication is table stakes for any job. What may be routine to you is not for the people experiencing the damage. Also, keep in mind that any one of those people can post a review or escalate the situation at any time.

From a unit owner's perspective, I do not want to make my neighbors miserable when repairs need to be done, exhaust my board (made up of my neighbors who do the job free), or alienate my building superintendent with demands on their time. But this is still a place I have invested in, that I live in, and I want the project to end as quickly as possible. Unit owners have a lot of additional stress in the equation and, therefore, staying on top of communication and updates will make the job easier on you as a restorer.

You also need to be aware of who owns what in a multi-unit space. In other words, who has the insurable interest in the building materials. It is possible the unit owner will hire you and contract with you, but you will still need to work hand-in-hand with the building staff in order to actually perform any work. And you may need to break down your work to bill both the unit owner and the building based on the work that needs to be performed and how much building material is affected.

If you are just entering into the multi-unit space, I would advise you to proceed with caution. You can offer your experience and knowledge, but you should also learn from everyone involved so you're able to give the best advice. In this scenario, one job can expand quite a bit and turn into a great set of projects, but only if you clearly understand how to meet the needs of everyone involved

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Marketing Matters: Practical Marketing Insights for Restoration Professionals

By Amanda Stichter

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Photos: Getty Images

It's a phrase as old as time—or at least as old as commerce itself: "You have to spend money to make money." This timeless adage is especially true in the world of restoration marketing, where the right investment can dramatically transform the trajectory of your business. However, it's something that I've witnessed countless business managers and owners struggle with. Asking questions such as "How much should I spend on marketing?" "What's the expected return on my marketing efforts?" and "How will we know if it's working?" Therefore, my goal in this article is to address these questions practically.

Understanding Marketing Investment

First, let's dive in by addressing the elephant in the room: I'd be willing to bet that every single person reading this article would say that they've been burned by their marketing spend before - at one point or another. While I don't doubt that to be true, I think it's important to begin by shifting our perspective on marketing spend for the duration of this article (& hopefully well into the future).

Instead of looking at marketing by the sheer cost that you're shelling out, we have to look at it for the potential of what that investment could bring to your business. You see marketing isn't just an expenditure in your business; it's an investment. And like any good investment, the goal is to yield more in return than you put in.

Assuming that you'll get a good return without investing anything into something would be akin to entering a marathon without training and expecting to come in the first place. Investment in your preparation and foundation is essential for success.

So let's start by shifting our perspective and then asking the question everyone wants to know the answer to. "How much should a restoration business invest into marketing to maximize its potential return?"

The U.S. Small Business Association suggests that businesses should spend between 7% and 8% of their gross revenue on marketing if they're aiming to maintain their current position and visibility in the market. However, if you're looking to grow and expand, that number should be closer to 10% to 12% of your revenue.

Additionally, the restoration industry is unique as it's highly competitive & heavily dependent on quick response and reputation. Therefore, I usually recommend that businesses start by investing 10% of their current gross revenue into marketing efforts.



Calculating Your Marketing Budget

Let's break this down a little further, and consider your business's annual gross revenue. For the sake of easy numbers, let's say your goal is to bring in \$1M this year. A 10% investment in marketing translates to a \$100,000 annual marketing budget. By the way, it's important to note that this budget should encompass all aspects of marketing - from digital campaigns and social media to boots-on-the-ground efforts and public relations.

Why do I (& plenty of other industry experts) suggest such a significant investment in your marketing? It's simple. In restoration, relationships and visibility are vital to your success. After all, the first company that comes to mind during a crisis is often the one that gets the call. Effective & ongoing (not one-and-done) marketing strategies help ensure that your brand is front of mind when a disaster strikes and when potential clients need restoration services.



ROI: What Should You Expect?

Investing in marketing is one thing, but understanding the return on that investment (ROI) is another. What should you be getting back for every dollar you spend?

Many businesses tell me they know the ROI on their business. However, when it comes down to it, they can't tell me exactly which jobs came from their marketing efforts; let alone what the return on that specific job was. And that's where this becomes key - it's not just understanding your marketing spend as an investment but also understanding the result of that investment.

This can be challenging to quantify precisely, but a well-structured marketing strategy should bring a noticeable increase in leads and conversions. Beyond that, a well-structured marketing partner should be able to identify the exact return on those leads as well as the initial source of them.

Okay, let's do a little more math:

If your increased marketing budget (10% of your gross revenue) results in a 20% increase in jobs, where each job is an average of \$10k, an additional 10 jobs per year would equate to \$100,000 - effectively paying for the marketing itself PLUS bringing 10 new customers to your door. Any growth beyond this is simply profit gained from your marketing efforts.

What's not to love about this? You spent some money and you made some money.

The Sum of It All

Recently, I was chatting with a new friend about growing restoration companies and asked him what words of advice he'd give to those in this industry. Rather than words of wisdom, he asked a question of wisdom. He simply said, "Does it matter?" He explained how restoration business owners sometimes get so hung up on the initial investment versus viewing them as an opportunity to learn and increase their market share. He even used the example, "So you lost \$5,000 on a Google ads campaign. So what! Does it matter?" By asking this question, he was essentially saying the following: Did you get some leads? Probably. Did you get as many as hoped? Maybe not. Did you get your name out there and invest in the future of your business? Yes! Was every dollar that went towards that campaign working towards growing your business both now and down the road? Yes.

If so, then does that \$5,000 really matter relative to the long-term goals of our business? No!

My friend's question struck me because, at the core of our understanding of marketing, we all know that it matters. However, we become stuck on the return of the investment rather than the long-term strategy behind the investment.

Good marketing produces long-term profitable outcomes after the investment. Not just one-time quick jobs to boost our performance here and now.

So let's go back to the adage that I started this article with: 'You have to spend money to make money'. This statement holds particularly true in the restoration industry when it comes to marketing. While the upfront costs might seem significant, the long-term benefits—increased visibility, enhanced lead generation, and expanded market share—reaffirm that these expenditures are not just costs but crucial investments in your business's future. A strategic approach to marketing spend not only offers some quick wins, but also sustained growth and success for your business.



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The Impact of Technology on Cleaning: REVOLUTIONIZING CLEANLINESS

By Myldred Ingram

In recent years, technology has been revolutionizing the way we clean our homes, offices, and public spaces. From automated robotic vacuums (my personal favorite) to smart cleaning devices, advancements in technology have made cleaning more efficient, effective, and convenient than ever before. One of the most significant impacts of technology on cleaning is the rise of robotic cleaning devices. Robotic vacuums, such as the popular Roomba, have become a staple in many households, automating the process of vacuuming and keeping floors clean on a daily basis. These devices utilize sensors and artificial intelligence to navigate and clean spaces independently, saving time and effort for users. Moreover, the development of smart cleaning devices has also transformed the cleaning industry.

Smart mops, steam cleaners, and air purifiers can be controlled remotely via smartphone apps, allowing users to schedule cleaning sessions, monitor air quality, and adjust settings from anywhere. This level of control and automation not only improves the cleaning process but also enhances convenience for users. Additionally, advancements in cleaning technology have led to the creation of environmentally friendly cleaning solutions. Green cleaning products, such as eco-friendly detergents and disinfectants, leverage technology to provide effective cleaning power without harmful chemicals. These products not only benefit the environment but also promote the health and well-being of individuals. Furthermore, the integration of technology in cleaning has improved hygiene and sanitation standards in various settings including the restoration and remediation industry.

UV sterilization wands, ozone generators, and electrostatic sprayers are examples of technologies that have been introduced to effectively disinfect surfaces and eliminate harmful pathogens. These innovations play a crucial role in maintaining clean and healthy environments, especially in healthcare facilities, schools, and public spaces.

Technology has had a profound impact on cleaning, transforming the way we approach cleanliness in our daily lives. From automated robotic devices to smart cleaning solutions and eco-friendly products, advancements in technology have made cleaning more efficient, convenient, and effective. As technology continues to evolve, the future of cleaning looks brighter than ever, promising cleaner and healthier spaces for everyone.

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The #1 directory of professional restorers and remediators, 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.



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