

Water Damage Rarely A Do-It-Yourself Project

(NAPSA)—Handling a water emergency is usually not a do-it-yourself project. Despite the best intentions, do-it-yourselfers can make some surprisingly costly mistakes when coping with water damage. These problems are exacerbated by today's new energy-efficient homes that trap moisture inside, more easily leading to mold and other problems.

Water in your home can come from a variety of problems caused by heavy rainstorms, leaky roofs, malfunctioning sump pumps, burst pipes, problem toilets or faulty washing machine hoses.

Knowing if you should handle the problem yourself depends on a variety of factors according to Peter Duncanson, director of disaster restoration training for ServiceMaster Clean. Duncanson suggests this general rule of thumb: "If it's just wetness and not standing water, you can probably take care of the water emergency. If it is more than seepage or a puddle, call a professional."

Whether you do it yourself or call in a professional, there are a few important rules to follow:

- **Act quickly.** Decide whether you can handle the situation yourself. If you need help, call immediately. In flooding, water typically flows toward substructure and lower floors. Porous materials will soak up the water, causing discoloration, swelling, warping and the breakdown of building materials. The more time that elapses before treatment, the greater the damage.

- **Stay out of a flooded room if the electricity is still on.** Wait for the professionals to arrive.

- **Turn off the source of water if you can do so without walking in standing water.** Once the water has been turned off, then determine your next steps.



Often a water emergency is best left for professionals to deal with.

One problem many do-it-yourselfers make is not being thorough enough at detection and treatment. That's because they often do not have the equipment or expertise to do the job.

Calling a professional restoration service, such as ServiceMaster Clean, will help you avoid costly repairs and future problems. These professionals use equipment such as non-penetrating meters to determine the extent of the damage. They inspect and evaluate the whole house, including many areas a homeowner might not think to look.

For instance, affected flooring, walls, carpeting and doors often have to be removed for treatment with antimicrobial and odor control products. High velocity air movers and dehumidifiers are used to reduce further damage.

The only way to determine if a home is completely dry is to test it using specialized equipment. Being thorough can help prevent serious structural and health problems later on.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.servicemasterclean.com or to request service, call 1-800-RESPOND.