

Don't Throw it Away: Tips to Save Family Treasures

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ATLANTA – Georgians who had family treasures, heirlooms, photos and books damaged during Tropical Storm Debby (Aug. 4--20) and Hurricane Helene shouldn't throw them away just yet. They may be salvageable and expert advice is available to help.

Here are some tips on how to save some of your family treasures:

- Flood water may be contaminated. Wear protective gloves, clothing and goggles.
- If an object is still wet, rinse it gently with clean water. If dry, remove silt and other foreign material with a soft brush or damp cloth.
- Air dry wet things indoors. Sunlight might be too intense. Keep humidity as low as possible to prevent mold accumulation.
- Don't try to separate photos or negatives that are stuck together. Soak them in water for up to 48 hours until you can safely pull them apart. Hang them with clips or clothespins to dry.
- Put wet books in a sturdy covered plastic container, spine side down. Place the container in a freezer and keep it there for several weeks, even months. Then remove and let dry.
- With fabrics or textiles, remove mud and debris with gently flowing clean water or fine spray from a hose. Press out the excess water with your hand. Do not try to wring out the water. Allow to dry.
- Clean wooden objects (like furniture) with a damp sponge; blot and let dry slowly inside the house, not under the sun.
- Rinse metal objects with clear water and blot dry immediately with a clean, soft cloth. Fans or low-heat hairdryers will hasten drying rate.
- For broken pottery or ceramics, put all the pieces in an open container and mark what it is. Don't try to glue the pieces back together until they are dry. And watch for mold. If mold appears, spray the pieces with Mold-Ex or a similar product.



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Page 1 of 2

[American Institute for Conservation and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation](#) provides advice on the proper care and maintenance of family heirlooms as well as a search tool to find local conservation professionals that can help salvage photos, books, textiles, paintings, wooden furniture and other valuable objects.

For the latest information about Georgia's recovery, visit fema.gov/helene/georgia and fema.gov/disaster/4821. Follow FEMA on X at x.com/femaregion4 or follow FEMA on social media at: [FEMA Blog](https://fema.gov) on fema.gov, [@FEMA](https://twitter.com/FEMA) or [@FEMAEspanol](https://twitter.com/FEMAEspanol) on X, [FEMA](https://facebook.com/FEMA) or [FEMA Espanol](https://facebook.com/FEMA_Espanol) on Facebook, [@FEMA](https://instagram.com/FEMA) on Instagram, and via [FEMA YouTube channel](https://youtube.com/FEMA). Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on X [@FEMA_Deanne](https://twitter.com/FEMA_Deanne).

