

Tips on Salvaging Flood-Damaged Family Treasures

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DES MOINES, Iowa – If you have family treasures, heirlooms, photos and books that were damaged in the March 12 - May 16 flooding, do not throw them away just yet. You may be able to save them, and there is expert advice available to help you.

FEMA offers fact sheets at www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/113297 that can help you save your possessions.

If your prized possessions have been in contact with sewage or any chemicals, you will need professional help. Call IMALERT (Iowa Museums, Archives and Libraries Emergency Response Team) at 319-384-3673. It accepts calls from members of the public and can provide advice and suggest a conservator who can help you.

Another resource is The Chicago Conservation Center, a private art conservation laboratory dedicated to the long-term preservation of artworks and heirlooms. It accepts inquiries from the general public and can be reached at 312-944-5401, info@theconservationcenter.com and by submitting an online conservation inquiry at www.theconservationcenter.com/contact-us.

Also offering basic salvage guidelines is the Heritage Emergency National Task Force, a coalition of 58 national organizations and federal agencies co-sponsored by FEMA and the Smithsonian Institution. For more information, visit the Heritage Emergency National Task Force at culturalrescue.si.edu/hentf/ or email HENTF@si.edu.

Here are some basic procedures to get you started:

- Gentle air-drying indoors is best for all your treasured belongings. Hair dryers, irons, ovens and prolonged exposure to sunlight will do irreversible damage. Increase indoor airflow with fans, open windows, air conditioners and



dehumidifiers.

- Use great caution in handling your heirlooms, which can be especially fragile when wet. Separate damp materials: remove the contents from drawers; take photographs out of damp albums; remove paintings and prints from frames; place paper towels between the pages of wet books.
- Gently loosen dirt and debris on fragile objects with soft brushes and cloths. Avoid rubbing, which can grind in the dirt.
- Clean photographs by rinsing them carefully in clean water. Air-dry photos on a plastic screen or paper towel, or by hanging them by the corner with plastic clothespins. Don't let the image touch any other surfaces as it dries.
- You may not be able to save everything, so focus on what's most important to you, whether for historic, monetary or sentimental reasons.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has faced discrimination or needs help with accessible communication, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362. Multilingual operators are available.

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