

Water Damage Restoration

Pay Now to Save Later

by Rene Vargas

It is two o'clock on Saturday morning in a hi-rise residential condominium; the security guard or front desk employee is falling asleep on the job. But, what happens next is completely unexpected! The phone rings at the front desk and is answered, "It's a great day at Florida Condominium Association. How can I be of assistance?" A unit owner on the 23rd floor is screaming for help because the main A/C line has ruptured and the water has begun to saturate all of her contents, walls, and flooring. The property manager, plumber, building engineer, and custodial staff are all called in to help. After arriving on site, it turns out that the water has now made its way down to the sixth level and has affected more than forty units.

The board has a decision to make and it must be made quickly in order to prevent secondary and permanent damages. But first, let's weigh in on today's insurance and market crisis that has caused many to make the wrong decision.

Insurance

Association managers and boards are faced with rising costs in insurance premiums due to active hurricane seasons in the past. In addition, associations have chosen to go with higher deductibles for claims in order to pay lower annual insurance premiums. As a result when damage does occur, whether it is fire, water, mold, or storm-related, it usually costs less than the deductible to repair. Thus, unit owners must be assessed to cover the cost.

The Market

Florida has seen the highest increase in property value it has ever experienced. In less than a few years, property value has increased more than 150 percent in some areas. This increase has made the average home less affordable for most, which has forced associations to abide by strict budgets in order to keep association/maintenance fees as low as possible.

The costly combination of these two factors is what association boards take into consideration before deciding on how to resolve the issue at hand. For us, it is obvious that the decision should be to contract a company

who specializes in water and fire damage restoration in order to minimize the damages. Unfortunately, to minimize assessments and immediate costs, many associations are deciding to use unqualified personnel to extract the water with “wet vacs,” install low capacity fans, and spray a deodorizer to cover up the smell.

The problem with a “do-it-yourself” solution is secondary damages: (a) the delamination of carpeting and flooring; (b) the effects on pictures, documents, and clothing due to humidity; (c) the absorption of moisture in gypsum board, baseboard, and insulation; (d) the growth of mold!

The cost for water damage restoration is 10 to 20 percent of the cost for mold remediation. The answer is clear, pay now to save later! Whether the incident is small or large—an A/C closet with wet carpet or 85 units with water—professional restoration is the only logical solution.

Most property managers or board members have never encountered a water intrusion or plumbing malfunction issue in their properties, which is why most do not know the extent of the potential damage or the value of proper emergency restoration.

The Process

It is very important for a property manager and the board to be prepared for an emergency. First, provide every employee with emergency contact information (maybe in the form of a laminated card); second understand the process of emergency service restoration and; third have a plan in place in case of an emergency.

When water has damaged your property or in the event of a plumbing failure or storm, the following steps should be taken by an IICRC (Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration) certified water damage restoration company.

- Protect all occupants from electrical danger
- Remove as many contents off the floor as possible
- Evaluate the damaged areas
- Extract all standing water
- Create wall openings for ventilation
- Install Dehumidification Equipment
- Install high velocity air movers
- Install specialty drying equipment if necessary
- Return daily to monitor the drying process

It is important to be familiar with the restoration process. We hear of too many people who call on a carpet cleaner when their carpets are wet or when they have three inches of water in their building. Ignoring the unseen is very common, which is why it is imperative to know your building’s construction and the effects water can have on it. For example: drywall soaks up moisture like a sponge and without proper tools to find these affected areas and drying equipment to dry them, it would be impossible to ensure safe indoor air quality and safe building materials.

Water infiltration or plumbing failure can be a disaster; however, the improper response to a disaster will result in higher costs in the long run, potential indoor air contamination, and an unsafe building. Make the right decision, pay now and save later!

Rene Vargas is owner of Super Restoration Company in Miami. For more information, please visit www.superrestoration.com. ■

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