

Restoration “odd jobs”

by Michael Collins
Commercial Client Advocate
J.C. Restoration, Inc.

Water damage? You know who to call for that. Fire and smoke? You don't even want to think about it, but you have, and you know to trust your restoration contractor for that. Reports of mold? They happen, and as the property professional you are, you can address that one, too.

“Restoration contractors” often provide other, less frequently called-upon services, with equal ease and professionalism as with their more bread-and-butter floods and fires. Here then are Michael Collins’ “Top Five Underpublicized Services of your Restoration Contractor:”

#5 Biohazard Cleanup

Most people giggle morbidly or awkwardly in asking about those “Sunshine Cleaning” sorts of jobs. The truth is that most calls for these services are less gore and more mundane death-by-natural-causes jobs in retirement communities and single-family homes. That said, cleanups do also happen in jail cells, industrial workplaces, restaurants, and indeed hotel rooms. The actual cleaning is not particularly challenging. The training manifests itself in the safe execution of the work, with proper care taken for the physical and psychological health of the workers.

#4 Residential Rodents

Typical residential insurance policies will cover claims against rodent damage for rodents larger than a squirrel. So if raccoons, skunks, or other varmint get into your building and wreak havoc, insurance will typically pay for the repairs. So while you didn't hear it from me, always leave it to someone else (like an insurance adjuster) to establish that the critters were squirrels or smaller. Your restoration contractor won't remove the animals from the property, but is trained in remedying whatever physical damage their presence created.

#3 Animal Waste

Once squirrels, bats, birds, raccoons, etc., have taken up residence, they do what all we animals do after eating. Cleaning up animal waste is also a task best left to the professionals who have the training to do so safely. Spores present in bat guano are many times more hazardous when inhaled than mold spores, and inhalation can result in fatal, tuberculosis-like disease. Roosting bats will leave a concentrated area, or even a pile, of droppings — which makes their droppings more readily identifiable from mouse droppings which will be more scattered. Similarly, droppings from birds like pigeons should also be cleaned by professionals educated on proper techniques. Strict, full personal protective equipment protocols must be followed in cleaning up animal carcasses and waste, especially with bats.

#2 Disinfecting Virulent Bacteria

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus is an increasingly hazardous “super-bug” that must also be treated with the utmost care. Meningitis is a highly dangerous infection whose spread can be contained through detailed cleaning. Norovirus outbreaks will bring cruise ships back to port for intensive cleanings.

Antibiotic-resistant pathogens are a growing concern in the public arena — especially in the world of sports and child care. Certain strains of infectious bacteria, such as staphylococcus (“staph”), have evolved resistance to the antibiotics we commonly use to fight them. Improper hygiene, incomplete surface disinfection, and individuals who fail to complete their prescribed dosage of antibiotics after being diagnosed with an infection have all contributed to the development of these “super bugs.” Safe cleaning and disinfecting with precautions for the cleaners is critical.

#1 Methamphetamine Lab Cleanup

Unfortunately, the rewards for producing methamphetamine and other narcotics in clandestine labs can appear to some to outweigh the risks. When these sites are discovered, law enforcement will remove the chemicals and equipment used — but the site itself remains a dangerous environment still contaminated with methamphetamine and hazardous chemical residues. Exposure to the volatile organic compounds of those residues may cause symptoms such as nose and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion, and breathing difficulties. Not only can the contents of an apartment or home become contaminated, the very building materials can absorb the residues and render the structure itself hazardous. Trained, safe removal of the materials, under adequate ventilation and personal protective equipment, is dictated by state law. Liabilities for exposure will quickly outpace the costs of disposal, and no one should enter the lab site without proper equipment.

While restoration contractors execute their most common jobs with equal regard to their own safety as for the properties' occupants, the common thread of these odd jobs is the exposure to grave risk to the persons executing the work. Just as a professional's telephone number should be in your cell phone to dry a flooded building, please exercise proper caution in these sorts of underpublicized scenarios by calling in the consultations of a qualified party.

Michael Collins, F.C.H.O.H.W. (“Friend Come Hell or High Water”) may be reached at 800/956-8844.