



W O N D E R M A K E R S
E N V I R O N M E N T A L

Frequently Asked Questions About CONTENT CLEANING

Q11: *I've heard that I need to get rid of all my contents. Is there any way that some of them can be cleaned so that I can use them in the future?*

A11: It is possible to clean contents. It is a matter of whether it is cost-effective to do so. Hard goods (non-porous) are the easiest to clean. Soft goods (clothing, bedding, etc.) can be laundered (see comments regarding the Esporta in Q&A12 below.) Items that are part porous and part upholstery are the most labor intensive, and therefore the most expensive, to clean.

Generally, the rule of thumb is the more contents that can be removed from the house, the more thorough the cleaning of both the contents and the structure. Nevertheless, there are practical limitations. Large bureaus, beds, couches, and appliances are difficult to move, even to a garage cleaning station. Things that are left in the house need to be thoroughly cleaned and then moved multiple times during the structure cleaning process. We do not recommend that they be covered and left in place because that hinders the proper cleaning of all surfaces.

The more consistent we can be with surfaces and contents, the better the result for sensitized individuals. For both surfaces and contents, the cleaning process begins with a HEPA sandwich method. Additional cleaning activities for both the structure and any remaining contents include air scrubbing, air washing, and fogging.

There is a webinar on cleaning contents that you can purchase at <http://esportastore.com/products/Mold-Webinar-Session-3.html>

Q12: *You said that at some point we will have to remove all the contents from our house. How should we go about packing it all up? Should we start now with things that aren't used regularly, to get a head start? I worry about mold getting in or on the boxes if we do it too soon.*

A12: The first decision that needs to be made about cleaning the contents of your home is where and how it will be accomplished. There are a few options:

1. Clean them on the way out of the house. This typically involves setting up a cleaning station in the garage or other area where contaminated contents from the house are staged, cleaned, and packed in clean containers. Although we prefer that plastic tubs with tightfitting lids be used as storage containers, cardboard boxes can be used as long as they are lined with plastic to protect the contents from moisture. Generally, the packing containers used on the way out of the house are not an issue—even old grocery boxes can be used; but after the items have been cleaned they should be stored and moved around in new boxes or plastic containers.
2. Some clients have even gone so far as to set up a washer and dryer in the garage with temporary water and power sources so that methodical cleaning can be conducted. We recommend, however, that any soft contents being saved be cleaned using the Esporta Wash System rather than regular washers and dryers.
3. Pack them and have them cleaned at a separate facility. The benefit to this approach is that you can utilize professionals who specialize in decontamination of all sorts of contents. In particular, this allows materials to be moved to a facility that has an Esporta Wash System. Also at a separate facility, many hard (non-porous) items can be cleaned using ultrasonic methods.
4. Pack the contents, store them until remediation has been completed, and then clean them on-site as they are moved back into the clean residence. While this approach has the benefit of the items being cleaned immediately before their reentry into the remediated structure, it does limit the cleaning methods that can be used. At the present time we know of no portable Esporta unit that can be brought onto a temporary job site.

Once a decision has been as to how and where the contents will be cleaned, it is much easier to proceed with packing. In all cases, it is best to view this situation as an opportunity to de-clutter your life. Content cleaning gets progressively more expensive as the number of items to be cleaned goes up. Also keep in mind that paper goods are the most difficult to clean properly and therefore are the most expensive. But for almost everything else, studies have shown that cleaning contaminated items costs only 20–25% as much as replacing them.

Q13: *We want to control the humidity in our temporary housing when we are not using the air conditioning. Can we clean and use our existing dehumidifier?*

A13: Your question is straightforward, but the answer is a bit complicated. Typically, any piece of electronic equipment can be properly cleaned. This generally involves a good wipe-down of the outside cabinet and a blow-down of the inside, using compressed air—either cans, like what is used for computers, or an air compressor at low pressure (10 to 15 psi). However, dehumidifiers are complicated by the fact that they have refrigerant coils and piping in addition to a fan and electronic components. Generally, the coils and piping can only be effectively

cleaned by using a foam coil cleaner designed for HVAC systems. You have to get full access to the coils by taking off whatever covers are in the way, then apply the coil cleaner, wait, and rinse. Obviously, this should be done out-of-doors. Once that is completed the other components can be wiped off and blown down, as appropriate. You can get coil cleaner online and at a number of HVAC supply stores. We can recommend a product for your particular situation, if desired. Of course, it may be less expensive in terms of effort and money to purchase a new dehumidifier for your temporary residence and dispose of the one you currently own.

Q14: *Can we use the washer and dryer in our house for doing laundry if we immediately take the cleaned clothes to our temporary housing?*

A14: There is a potential for cross-contamination by doing laundry in your house; however, with the proper precautions the possibility should be slight. In such a situation it makes sense to use large plastic tubs with tightfitting lids (Rubbermaid, Sterilite, etc.) for transporting clothes from the dryer to your temporary housing. The clean clothes should be moved from the dryer directly into a container and covered. Do not take the time to shake out or fold the clothes while inside the contaminated home. Once outdoors, the outside of each container should be wiped down before moving it into your current living space. It may also make sense to air out and fold the clothes out-of-doors, before bringing them into your temporary housing. This depends on whether you, personally, do better out-of-doors or inside the controlled environment.