

Restoration firms help businesses, residents recover after fire, water damage

By Lori McGinnis Black

Dealing with damage caused by water and fire often is a job for professional restoration firms.

Restoring property after fire or water damage is a process, said Kevin Bousema, president of ServiceMaster of Sarpy County.

According to Laura Ousley, owner of Maxim Cleaning & Restoration, the most important factor when damage occurs is safety for the occupants and their valuables.

Responding to damage quickly will help mitigate it, said Mark Daly, chief operating

officer with Paul Davis Restoration.

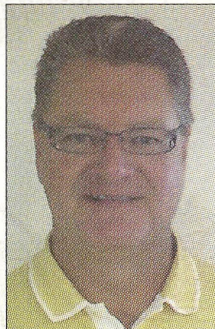
Working to restore a structure to normal functions is an important task of a restoration company, said Deb Ash, commercial business development director with ServPro of Sarpy County.

The first step in repairing damage from water or fire, Bousema said, is contacting the insurance company to determine coverage. Many people assume they have coverage for damage when they do not, so it is important to periodically review coverage.

Once that is determined, ServiceMaster has a process to restore damaged residential and business properties to the way they were before the damage, Bousema said. The first step for ServiceMaster is assessing the situation and giving advice on how to remedy it.

In the case of water damage, the moisture

must be extracted from the carpet, floors or walls and then removed from the air via dehumidifiers, he said.



Bousema



Ousley



Daly

"Typically, we can dry out a place in two days or less," he said.

When damage occurs, occupants of any building must first make sure they and their valuables are safe, according to Ousley. They should not, however, wait for catastrophes to occur. Occupants need to continually assess their homes or businesses for potential problems that could result in damage.

Potential contractors should be thoroughly questioned and hard copies of certifications and licenses should be obtained. Contractors are available for every problem, and business qualifications, reputation and practices should always be checked, she said.

Each insurance policy is unique and should be reviewed annually with the agent.

"One thing we see a great deal is sewer backup and malfunctioning sump pumps," Ousley said. "Most people think they automatically have coverage."

When damage occurs, responding to it quickly will help prevent further or secondary damage, Daly said.

Every property owner should know where their shut-off valves are for all water sources, he said. Property owners should look for overloaded circuits that could create a potential fire hazard in commercial and residential properties.

According to Daly, check storage areas and make sure items are off the floor or in plastic bins. Valuables should be photo-

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graphed and documented and kept in a safe place, he said.

Daly recommends surveying property regularly to look for potential problems so that issues can be addressed as needed. Roofs should be inspected and repaired to prevent leakage.

"Talk to your insurance agent to completely understand your policy and coverage," Daly said. "If you are engaged and involved with your insurance agent and coverage, there will be no surprises if you have a claim."

ServPro responds to water, fire, biohazard and vandalism incidences with the goal of

limiting further damage and costs, according to Ash.

Services offered include fire, smoke and soot restoration; odor identification and deodorization; water removal and dehumidification; mold mitigation and remediation; cleaning of air ducts, carpets, drapes, blinds and upholstery; and document drying and contents claim inventory services.

"We believe in pre-testing to help determine which area of a structure was affected to not only determine the best cleaning method, but also to minimize costs and to resume normal business functions as quickly as possible," Ash said.