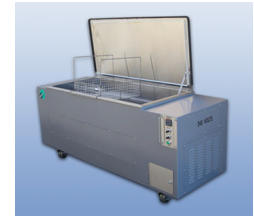


Ultrasonic Cleaning Saves Time, Labor and Quality

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Disaster restoration companies make great attempts at restoring content of homes and businesses following fires and floods. With painstaking handwork—incorporating toothbrushes, cotton swabs, and even toothpicks—every attempt is made to bring such items back to life and usability. But a good 30% - 40% of such content is still lost as such methods often fail. That is, until ultrasonic cleaning methods are employed; at that point the loss becomes a minuscule 5% to 10%.



“We used to have to clean everything by hand using toothbrushes, Q-tips, fingertips, and rags,” says Mark Keller, owner of Steamatic, a restoration company located in Las Vegas. “We had six people in there cleaning and we would do probably 14 or 15 boxes of contents per day.”

The hardest objects to get clean were small delicate items with a lot of detail, such as Hummel figurines, which never seemed to be clean enough. Electronic items were also very difficult and often had to be discarded, and tools kept in garages were often written off by insurance companies as they would develop rust after water damage.

Derek West, owner and president of Service Team of Professionals, a disaster restoration company in Twin Cities, Minn., also remembers the difficulty of salvaging such items. “It was a lot of labor-intensive hours of people standing at a washtub just cleaning things,” he says. “Costs were extremely high. We lost money because of the labor.” He generally had a labor force of 6 – 8 people involved in hand cleaning.

Not long ago, both Keller and West discovered ultrasonic cleaning, which utilizes specialized environmentally friendly but effective solutions, heat, water, and ultrasonic sound waves. Users have not only found the method to be more cost-effective in terms of labor and time, they’ve also found it to do a more effective job of cleaning, due to cavitations within the liquid reaching areas unable to be cleaned by human hands or other devices. Keller and West both use ultrasonic cleaning equipment from Omegasonics of Simi Valley, Calif.

First, objects are placed in a metal basket. The first stop for the basket is a pre-wash tank, which removes the gross ash and soot. From there the basket is moved to an ultrasonic tank, which deep-cleans the objects. The items are then moved into a rinse detail station and then into the drying process.

“It expedites our process over doing it free-hand probably tenfold,” says Keller. “That’s how fast you can clean with this system. We went from doing 14-15 boxes of contents per day to 60 boxes per day. I was also able to reduce the cleaning crew down from 6 to 3 to 4 people.”

“We’re able to clean contents so much faster with the ultrasonics,” agrees West. “We’re doing 10 times what we were doing before.” He was able to reduce his labor force from 6 – 8 people down to 3, and he reports that it literally takes longer to pack the box back up than to clean the contents.

More sensitive electronic items such as computers and DVD players that cannot be submerged in water are placed in an electronic cleaning station cabinet utilizing a combination of finely directed de-ionized water spray, soap and heat. The method is extremely accurate and thorough, and removes 100% of contaminants remaining from fire or water damage. Once cleaned, objects are then placed in a drying chamber just as the objects from the ultrasonic tank.

Prior to these methods, insurance companies would usually instruct that electronic items be disposed of. This was because cleaning methods weren't adequate; blown air was used to attempt to remove ash and soot and much of it would remain behind inside components, causing corrosion. Another issue occurred when an electronic component was turned back on after cleaning, the plastic elements would heat up and release smoke odors. The combination of the spray cabinet and heating chamber now removes this problem; the pores in the plastic are opened up in the drying chamber and a deodorizing agent is applied so that all odors are permanently released.

The list of items that can be cleaned is virtually endless, and includes objects such as figurines, dishes, glasses, silverware, silk plants, picture frames, electronics and even blinds. Fine delicate items are no longer a problem, and rust-damaged tools can be cleaned so they look like new.

In addition to speed, quality has also risen greatly. Both Keller and West report that prior to ultrasonics, they were able to recover 65%-70% of the items they took in to clean. That level has risen to 95%-98%.

"All the things run through the ultrasonic process, the quality is unsurpassed," West says. "If it's not physically melted, we're saving it," he says.

Ultrasonic saves insurance companies considerable money in goods that would have been discarded that can now be salvaged. West estimates that ultrasonic cleaning has saved \$200,000 for insurance companies just in the last two months, and thinks he'll be able to save them a million dollars before the year is out.

"It's the best thing I've ever bought for restoration," West concludes. "It's that impressive."

The Omegasonics Restoration Pro System package, which both West and Keller utilize in their companies, consists of a pre-wash tank, an ultrasonic tank, an electronic cleaning station, a rinse detail station and a drying chamber. For more information call (805) 583-0875 or visit the web site at www.omegasonics.com.

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