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DISASTER AND CATASTROPHE RESTORATION

As the professional cleaning contractor considers the opportunity and potential of disaster and catastrophe restoration, it becomes obvious that there are a wide array of occurring catastrophes and disasters, both large and small, that can be restored by the application of equipment and chemical technology readily available. Disaster restoration might simply be defined as the necessary clean up work and restoration work required to bring the premises of a business or home back to the condition they were in prior to the disaster. This can include all sorts of catastrophes including water damage, fire and smoke damage, pet urine contamination, murder/suicide clean-up, skunk odor contamination, decomposing protein odors, tear gas or fuel oil clean-ups, and much more. Natural disasters such as river flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes, forest and field wildfires, and even earthquakes may contribute to the need for comprehensive disaster restoration. Cleaning contractors are ideal for diversification into disaster restoration for many reasons, and the simple fact is that most restoration is, primarily, the application of massive clean-up efforts.

The profit potential for all of this work is unlimited, because you are performing a service that either most people don't want to, or don't have the skills to do. In addition, the cost of restoration services is usually only 10-50% of the cost of replacement, so you are saving both the home or business owner and the insurance company a large sum of money. But before you decide the disaster restoration business is for you, there are some things to consider:

1. Do you have a line of credit with your bank? You will have to pay for your expense in a cleanup long before you get paid. Many times, companies have to wait months before receiving checks from an insurance company.
2. Do you have the proper management skills? More responsibilities, more employees, more challenges, etc., will confront you. If you haven't shown the ability to manage your cleaning business now, then stay out of Disaster Restoration. It would only provide you with more headaches.
3. Are you willing to submit your company to the education necessary to do the job? Disaster restoration requires a great financial commitment in both the areas of equipment and chemicals, and in the areas of education. You have to know what you are doing.
4. Can you work well with other companies? Disaster Restoration may include the need for electricians, plumbers, construction contractors, interior design specialists, and many others. There is no way your company can do everything. Can you work with other companies?
5. How are you at developing relationships with insurance claims adjusters and agents? In this, more than any other diversified area, you have to work with insurance adjusters. Are you ready for this commitment?

If you answered yes to each one of these questions, then disaster restoration services may be for you.

A complete range of equipment and chemicals are available to make the disaster restoration job easier. Almost all restoration jobs require a combination of restoration procedures to eliminate the problems. Yet, this investment is still very minor in relation to the return. Different types of hot and cold foggers are available to introduce a deodorizing fog into the airspace. Ozone generators eliminate unpleasant odors by using a natural means of deodorizing i.e., the use of ozone gas. In addition, complete lines of

specialty chemicals are available to handle each specific requirement. The significant improvements that have been made in how well these chemicals work as well as their application procedures, have made almost any situation one that the restoration technician can easily handle. Choosing the right chemical and equipment supplier can be a key to your success. Choose a supplier that offers a complete line of equipment and chemicals with many alternatives. For example, a supplier who sells only fogging equipment and chemicals for odor control would not be able to inform you about the tremendous benefits of ozone. It is rather like a mechanic whose only tool is a screwdriver. You should be prepared by having all the "tools" to do the job right. If your supplier has a complete line of water damage restoration, odor control, and fire damage restoration equipment and chemicals, he can recommend the right "tool" for each job. And it will save you countless hours of research and phone calls.

The cleaning firm that is interested in becoming involved in disaster restoration should recognize two important facts. First, disaster restoration is labor intensive and requires skills to know how to use the equipment and chemicals that are available. Attending various seminars, schools, workshops, and conventions to acquire this knowledge is an absolute must. The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration Certification (IICRC) approves the instructors and curriculum of several technical schools, making attendees at these schools eligible to take a comprehensive certification exam in fire damage, water damage, and odor control restoration. An approved IICRC school is your first logical step in beginning this educational process. Talk to your local distributor about the educational opportunities available. Secondly, the cleaning company must recognize that marketing disaster restoration services goes well beyond normal cleaning marketing. Marketing to, and understanding the needs and requirements of insurance adjusters is the single most important source of business. In addition, the restoration specialist has to be prepared to handle any and all types of situations. Most importantly, without the intestinal fortitude and dedication to communicating the message that you can perform these restoration services, you'll never have the chance to do the job—right or wrong—in the first place.

The company that has comprehensive skills in cleaning the total indoor environment will find many of these skills put to constant use in restoration. It is a natural area of diversification. With more and more research going on in indoor air pollution, time and time again, comprehensive cleaning skills are being demonstrated as an absolute necessity in restoring an indoor environment to a "healthy" condition. The potential is there. Select a supplier who is ready and able to handle all of your equipment, chemical and training needs and has a full understanding of how to use them. And more importantly, how to make money with them. The door of opportunity is open, the question lies in whether the cleaning company wants to invest the time and money to walk through it.

About the author:

R. Doyle Bloss is the Chief Executive Officer for Steam Way International, Inc. in Denver, Colorado. Steam Way manufactures a complete line of deodorization and restoration equipment and chemicals, and sponsors IICRC approved training schools in water damage restoration, fire and catastrophe damage restoration, and odor control. You can reach Steam Way for more information by calling 1-800-447-8326.