

Guidelines for Emergency Treatment After a Hurricane

Post-hurricane recovery can be critical for the preservation of paintings, as they may have been exposed to moisture, humidity, and contaminants. Each painting may respond differently, so always consult with a professional conservator.

Mold is the most significant cause of longterm damage to both art works and human health. Always wear appropriate PPE when handling affected paintings.

The following guidelines provide initial steps for triage and stabilization:

1. **Quickly Remove Moisture:** The most immediate concern is to remove moisture from the painting to prevent mold growth and material degradation. However, this must be done without using direct heat, which can cause additional damage.
2. **Maintain Tension:** Keep the painting under gentle weight or tension throughout the drying process. This helps prevent shrinkage, warping, and other distortions.
3. **Blot Gently:** Use blotting materials (e.g., absorbent paper, clean towels) avoid rubbing or pressing too hard, as this can damage the paint layer. Only blot from the back of the art work.
4. **Dry the Environment:** Use HEPA air-filtered dryers and dehumidifiers to reduce the moisture level in the environment. Proper air circulation will facilitate the drying process without subjecting the painting to direct heat.
5. **Clean Only When Dry:** Once the painting is completely dry, carefully remove any debris from the front. Cleaning while wet increases the risk of removing solubilized paint and further damage.
6. **Dust the Back:** After the painting is dry, gently dust the back. You can apply Lysol to the reverse side to prevent mold growth, but ensure the painting remains under tension or weight during this process to avoid shrinkage.
7. **Moving Art Work:** Move Artwork Carefully: When moving affected artworks, pack and seal them properly to avoid contaminating other works or clean environments.
8. **Consult a Conservator:** Always reach out to a conservator for a tailored treatment plan and to avoid avoidable damage.