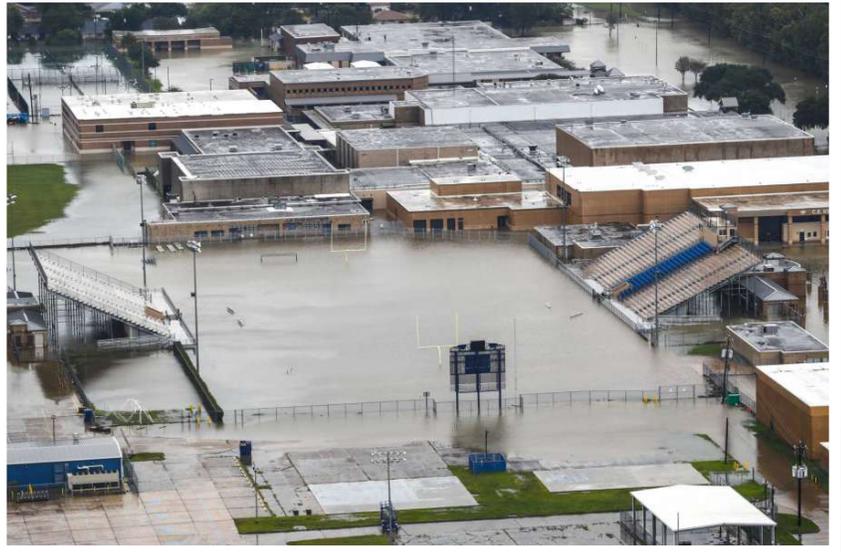


BTSB TIPS FOR FLOODING

AND RESOURCES



Paper and water do not go together so flooding is definitely a disaster in the library. The most important thing to do is to remove any standing water from the library as quickly as possible. Don't forget, anywhere there is standing water, be very cognizant of possible electric hazard. Then, if possible, reduce the air temperature to 65 ° F or less. The big enemy is mold, which can grow on the books within 48 hours if they are damp and the air temperature is too high. The next problem is the chemicals used in the paper and in the inks and glues. These can react with water and turn a group of loose pages into a solid block. Lastly, we have to worry about whether the floodwater was just water or did it contain chemicals and contaminants. Even if we can dry out the book those contaminants will be hard to get rid of and will make the book unusable.

After you have removed the standing water and reduced the air temperature, if possible you should take any books that appear to be completely dry and move them to a separate dry room. This is so the wet books don't develop mold and transfer it to the dry books.

The next step is to evaluate the wet books and to place them into various groups. If you have any rare or very expensive books, particularly with leather covers or heavily coated paper stock, set those aside for immediate freezing. This will at least stop any further damage from the water. A home frost-free freezer that has been turned down below -10 ° F could dry out a small number of items over a period of several months. However, if you have quite a few items and a decent budget, you will probably want to investigate the advanced methods of blast freezing, freezer drying or vacuum freeze-drying with a professional conservation vendor.

The next group to identify is those normal books with normal paper that are only damp or slightly wet. If there are not an overwhelming number of these, and you have the space and time, the most economical way to deal with these is by air-drying them. This can be done with commonly available supplies such as towels, paper towels, and fans. You will want to do this in a room in which you can keep the temperature at 65 ° F or below and the relative humidity between 30 and 50%. Follow the recommended procedures by the experts listed below.

Don't be disappointed if, despite your best efforts, you have some discoloration and warping in these books.

If there are an overwhelming number of these damp books then air-drying is not a good option. Hopefully, you can find some budget to go to a professional conservation vendor and get some help. One set of options they will have, although expensive and time-consuming, is the various freezing options mentioned above. Another possibility, which has the advantage of allowing you to keep the collection in place, is a large desiccant dehumidification system. The small dehumidifiers for homes just don't have the power and fine control needed to do this job.

Another method of drying out materials available to most professional vendors is in a vacuum thermal-drying chamber. This is somewhat expensive and really causes a great deal of discoloration and warping by the time it is finished. This would probably be an option only for truly unique and irreplaceable materials that it is important that you have available and that you can live with in an imperfect state.

It is very tempting to think about putting wet books in the oven or microwave to dry out. **Don't do it!** High heat will ruin the structural integrity of the paper and books and warp them beyond being functional again.

The final group of books, and in some cases this may be your entire collection, is the books that just need to be taken to the dump and totally replaced. You have the health and safety issues of the mold and contaminants that you may not ever be sure you have totally eliminated. There is the cost, space and time burdens of trying to repair your wet books. There is the fact that most repairs are still going to leave your books discolored and misshapen. All of these problems need to be weighed against the \$20-25 cost of a new book and many people, if they have any insurance proceeds or district budget at all, would conclude that the smart choice is to replace those well-loved but soggy old books.

DID YOU KNOW?



**That mold can
begin to grow in
24 to 48 hours...**

For More Information

What To Do If Collections Get Wet by Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/emergprep/dry.html>

Wet Book Rescue (video) by Syracuse University Libraries, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS9_fwmdCyzo

Air Drying Techniques for Water Damaged Books (video) by Conservators of Preservation Australia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRw5cqdWsWY>

Emergency Salvage of Moldy Books and Paper by Northeast Document Conservation Center, <https://nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/3.-emergency-management/3.8-emergency-salvage-of-moldy-books-and-paper>

Procedures for air drying wet books and records by Cornell University Library, <https://www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/librarypreservation/mee/management/proceduresforairdryingwetbooksandrecords.html>

Disaster Recovery Salvaging Books, by Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts www.ccaha.org/uploads/media_items/technical-bulletin-salvaging-books.original.pdf



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