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Wasson's Newsletter

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455 Reservation Road Marina, CA 93933

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Wealth of skills needed to help stricken home and business owners when disaster strikes



Home that suffered massive fire damage. Photo by David Wasson. Article by Jennifer Filzen

David Wasson, President of Wasson's Cleaning & Restoration, says the field of disaster clean-up is exciting and challenging, with something new every day. Disaster clean-up specialists take years of training to be able to quickly help people badly affected by anything from floods to fire to high winds to crimes.

One has to look no further than the fires that ravaged Santa Cruz County last month to grasp what disaster clean-up crews have to deal with.

Devastated homeowners, soaking wet electrical systems, ruined drywall, wet computers, rotting wood and the onset of mold only begin to tell the tale because these experts are called on no matter what the disaster: flood, fire, disaster, vandalism, even trauma-scene clean-ups.

But don't think you can earn a carpenter's diploma and call yourself a disaster-remediation professional, says Luis Cortes, Wasson's General Manager. There are several levels of certification you must go through, at the very least.

"It takes years of training and the big thing is, you can't just take all these courses and then get a certificate and hang a sign on your door," Cortes says. "If you don't know what you're doing, you can get yourself in a lot of trouble."

Most disaster calls come from insurance companies, and unless you've earned a sterling reputation in the business, your phone won't ring because there are plenty of expert alternatives in what has become a very competitive line of business.

"There's plenty of work to go around, but it's a very tough field," Cortes says.

The best way to get into disaster remediation is the way Wasson's has done it. Wasson's began serving the greater Monterey Peninsula area with Wasson's Cleaning & Restoration in 1987, and after years of taking courses and passing tests to be certified in many aspects of disaster recovery, Wasson's has added Wasson's Construction, Wasson's Plumbing & Heating, and 1-800-BoardUp.

David Wasson claimed, "You would have to work here for, I'd say, at least 10 years before you could even think of starting your own company."

It's a very technical business these days, with equipment that actually cleans and restores flooded electronics, furniture -- even the entire inside of homes, with or without removing everything from the building, depending on the case.

Some situations could call for stripping a home right down to the studs. For example, in the case of fire, the smoke can be so pervasive that sometimes the building's contents and the entire interior have to be ripped out and the studs and other wood structure sealed, trapping the smoke so the smell never again escapes, after which the interior is rebuilt.

The technology used by disaster-remediation specialists can do some amazing things when used in expert hands. Machines test flood victims' houses for moisture content. Infra-red cameras detect problems behind walls. Computer systems track house contents and where they are stored, because if needed, Wasson's crew will remove everything you own, fix your home, clean the home's contents, then put everything back exactly where you left it. They also have equipment that will actually scrub the air throughout the building, so no moisture or odors remain trapped inside.

Wasson's is certified nationally by the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration in dealing with mold, water, smoke, odor, applied structural drying and other facets of disaster recovery. Wasson's offers full-service, so that the home or business owner has to do nothing but call their insurer.

"The phone rings and we get up and go. We're on call 24/7. The faster we can get there and start doing remediation work, the less damage that occurs. We are ready to go at any time," Cortes says.

In the case of damaged businesses that must stay open during remediation, they can start their efforts immediately after working hours, work all night, and then clean up in time for reopening the next morning, continuing night after night until the job is done.

A career in disaster remediation means hard work, obviously, but sometimes you must go above and beyond the norm, for example when cleaning a trauma scene. When Wasson's was called to the scene of a violent home invasion, they found blood everywhere.

"But we have a whole lot of products that are biological which let us clean up even blood without ripping and tearing things apart," Cortes says.

Most jobs require very specialized knowledge, for example when a furnace oil tank ruptures and spills its contents.

"It's an exciting line of work", Cortes says, "because you never know what your next call will be. During the January 2008 storms, which heavily affected the greater San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay regions, for example, his office was dispatched in a record amount of service calls, helping home and business owners get back on their feet.

And it's not all technical work, Cortes adds. You've got to be able to deal with very upset homeowners who've just been through a fire, a flood or a violent crime and be able to make them feel better so they can calmly understand the scope of the work that will need to be done and how the project will unfold.

Wasson stated, "We understand that this is someone's tragedy, so we handle everything with sensitivity and respect. We are here to help, so we give our all to make the best of a situation."

Wonderful Summertime Nonalcoholic Drinks

Recipes from www.floras-hideout.com

Who doesn't like something cold and refreshing on a hot summer day? Here are a few summertime beverages that the whole family is sure to enjoy.

1. ALMOND ICED COFFEE: Combine 1 cup of strong brewed coffee with 1 cup of skim milk, 1/2 tsp vanilla extract, 1/4 tsp almond extract and 1 tsp sugar. Pour the mixture into two ice-filled 10-oz glasses and garnish each with a light sprinkling of cinnamon. Serves 2.
2. BANANA & ORANGE SMOOTHY: In a blender, puree 1 banana, 1 cup of orange juice (or 1/2 cup each of orange and grapefruit juices), 1/2 cup of crushed ice and 1 tb of lemon juice. Serves 1.
3. FRUIT SPRITZER: In a blender or food processor, puree 1 cup ripe, seeded and cubed honeydew melon, 1 unpeeled nectarine or peach that has been cubed, 1/2 cup of orange juice and a 1/2 cup of cracked ice. Fill 2 10-oz glasses 3/4 full and top off with a splash of seltzer water. Serves 2.
4. ICED CHOCOLATE ESPRESSO COFFEE: Mix 2 cups fresh-brewed, hot espresso coffee with 1/2 cup superfine granulated sugar and 1 oz. square of semisweet chocolate (chopped). After the sugar dissolves and the chocolate melts, refrigerate the mixture for at least 3 hours. Pour into wine glasses filled with finely crushed ice and garnish with fresh whipped cream and a chocolate covered coffee bean. Serves 2.
5. KIWI & GINGER SPARKLE: Blend 1 ripe kiwi fruit (peeled and cut up), 1 ripe peach (peeled, pitted and cut up) and 1/4 cup crushed ice until liquefied. Fill two 10-oz glasses half full of mixture. Fill the remainder of each glass with ginger ale. Garnish with kiwi slice. Serves 2.

6. ORANGE MIST: Freeze 2 cups of orange juice in an ice-cube tray. Place half of the orange ice cubed in a blender with 2 cups of orange juice and 1 tb of lime juice. Puree until slushy and transfer to a large glass pitcher. Repeat with the remaining ice cubes, orange juice and lime juice. Add two cups of ginger ale (well-chilled) and stir. Serve in wine glasses garnished with kiwi slices. Serves 8.

7. PEACH, ORANGE & GINGER FIZZ: Thaw a 10-oz package of frozen peaches in light syrup according to the package directions. Puree peaches in a food processor or blender. Divide the peach puree evenly among 4 10-oz glasses. Add 1/2 cup of orange juice and a handful of ice cubes to each glass. Top each with a splash of ginger ale. Stir gently and garnish with orange slices. Serves 4.

8. STRAWBERRY CRUSH: Break a 10-oz package of frozen strawberries in light syrup into large chunks and place in food processor or blender. Remove orange zest (the orange part of the peel) with a vegetable peeler. Squeeze orange and add juice to the strawberries and puree until smooth. For each serving, place 2 rounded tablespoons of the mixture in the bottom of a champagne glass. Slowly add 6 oz. chilled orange flavored seltzer and stir to form a foamy head. Garnish with a spiral of orange zest draped over the side of each glass. Serves 8.

9. TOMATO & HORSERADISH QUENCHER: Mix 8 oz. of tomato juice, 1 tb lemon juice and 1 tsp horseradish (freshly grated, if available) in a cocktail glass. Add an ice cube or two. Garnish with a grinding of black pepper, a twist of lemon peel and a cucumber spear. Serves 1.

10. WHITE GRAPE JUICE SANGRIA: Peel the skin of 1 orange into one long spiral. Repeat with a lemon. Fill a large pitcher with ice. Add 1 28-oz bottle of white grape juice, 1 32-oz bottle of seltzer, the juice of the orange and the lemon, and the orange and lemon zest spirals. Stir well. Pour into wine glasses and garnish each with a slice of lime. Serves 8.

After The Fire: Returning To Normal

Article by Jennifer Filzen

This is the first article in a series about what to do after your property has been damaged by a fire, storm, or other disastrous event. Recovering from these events can be a physically and emotionally exhausting process. It can be disorienting to some and devastating to others.

When such a disastrous event occurs, victims lives can suddenly be turned around. Many victims feel distraught, lost, confused and helpless. The first steps to recovery are usually based on gaining some sense of control over the immediate situation. This process often begins in incremental steps for some and giant leaps for others.

Often, the hardest part for some victims is just knowing what resources are available, who to contact, and what to do first.

Gaining a sense of control for many can be accomplished by becoming mentally grounded, objectively analyzing the situation and developing a step-by-step plan for recovery.

Here is a checklist of items to be removed immediately if uninhabitable:

- Insurance Documents
- Jewelry
- Phone/Address Book
- Firearms
- Cash/Credit Cards
- Cell Phone
- Driver License & Other ID
- Car Keys

- Pets
- Medical Information
- Eyeglasses, Hearing Aids, or Other Prosthetic Devices
- Medicine, Food and Beverages exposed to heat, smoke, soot, and water should not be consumed!
- Number to your local Red Cross:
 - Monterey-San Benito Counties Red Cross: 831-375-5730
 - Santa Clara County Red Cross: 408-577-1000
 - Santa Cruz County Red Cross: 831-462-2881
- Be sure Utilities are either safe to use or disconnected
- Is the site secured or boarded-up?
 - If not, call 1-800-BoardUp (1-800-262-7387)
 - or 831-883-3305.

In following articles in this series, we will cover such topics as what to do in the first 24 hours, insurance, valuing your property, the restoration process, recovery, and fire department processes.

In the meantime, remember to be fire safe by following these guidelines:

- Clear dry brush from the perimeter of your home
- Get rid of unnecessary chemicals from under your kitchen sink and in your garage (old cleaning supplies, old paint cans, dead batteries, etc.)
- Make sure you blow out all candles when unattended
- Turn off your stove and furnace before leaving the premises

How to Cut Expenses, Calories and Still Go to Restaurants

Article by Carolyn O'Neil of Cox News Service

With gas prices exceeding \$4.00 per gallon, the family budget has had to go on a diet. Gas prices make everything else increase in cost, including food and power. Here are some tips to help keep restaurant dining off the endangered list while keeping an eye on bodily and monetary figures.

Divide and conquer

Event though weight-control experts have warned against them, there's an upside to the overly large portions some restaurants offer. Make it a practice to divide a large portion in half before you start eating. You'll halve the calories and the cost of your meal. Think of "planned-overs" rather than "left-overs". If you remove half the food immediately so it's out of sight, you won't be tempted to eat the whole serving, and the takeout container will keep the food fresher longer.

All-around savings

When it comes to restaurant portion size, you can be penny-wise and pound-wise. When you have a choice, order smaller servings of foods, such as burgers, soups and so on. They're lower in calories and cost. Try splitting a few great-sounding appetizers while ordering your own side salads to save money and calories.

Happily, many restaurants have increased the number of appetizers offered because that's what customers are demanding. Some restaurants encourage family-style sharing, so rather than appearing cheap, you're actually being chic.

Lunch for less

Many restaurants offer some of the same delicious dishes for lunch as for dinner, only in smaller portions and for less money. Want to eat at that fancy restaurant? Check its noontime menu and

enjoy a leisurely lunch, sometimes at half the price. You'll also be meeting the healthy-eating mission to consume most of your calories during the day when you're most active.

Think...half a dessert

Splitting dessert has always been mission control for weight control. You and your dining companion can dig into the \$5-a-serving dessert for half the price and half the calories. Make sharing a habit with all desserts.

Take a walk

Rather than choosing the valet parking for shortest route from car door to restaurant table, why not intentionally find a parking spot that's a bit farther away but free? Park the car yourself instead of using a valet to save a few dollars and burn some extra calories coming and going from the restaurant. Or, if you're lucky enough to live close by, leave the car at home.

Brian Tracy Success - Separate Urgent From Important

Article by Brian Tracy of www.briantracysuccessstips.com.

Everything you do throughout the day fits into one of four categories:

1. Urgent and Important Tasks

You can't ignore these tasks because they're right in your face: a pesky phone call, a company meeting, a coworker stopping by to talk about something work-related. Put these off at your own peril.

If you're like a lot of people, you spend a lot of time working on these types of tasks. Some folks call this "putting out fires."

2. Important but NOT Urgent Tasks

Brian Tracy says that if you want to create the longest-lasting impact on your life, then finish these types of task.

These tasks include updating your business skills, personal renewal, spending time with your family, and physical fitness and exercise.

Don't put these tasks off for another day. If you want to change your life for the better, work on these now.

Mark my words, if you don't work on the Important BUT NOT Urgent Tasks now, they come back to bite you in the butt. Some tasks in this category are term papers for school and reports for your boss.

3. Urgent but NOT Important Tasks

Included in this group are phone calls, talking with coworkers, who drop by, about non-work related stuff.

Brian Tracy says that these tasks will have negative effects on your success. Don't delude yourself into thinking this type of work is important work.

In fact, these kinds of tasks are great time- and career-wasters. Stay away from tasks in this area.

But the biggest time-wasters are those in group four:

4. Neither Urgent NOR Important

Stay away from these tasks. They are completely useless; they have no consequences at all. Don't do things like reading the newspaper or calling home to find out what's for dinner. You will be contributing nothing to the company goals or to your personal aspirations.

To recap...

Always work first on your Most Urgent and Important Tasks. Next complete the Important But Not Urgent Tasks. And most vital to increasing your productivity is to refuse to work on non-important tasks.

Finally, always ask yourself "What are the lasting consequences of completing this task?"

When you answer this question, you'll know what to work on.

Tell Us What You Think!

We hope you've enjoyed Wasson's Newsletter. For suggestions, comments, articles or questions, email us at jfilzen@wassons.net.



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