



Caring for Important Papers after a Flood

*Extension Family Development and Resource Management Specialists
The Texas A&M University System*

Valuable papers and records should be given maximum protection from any disaster. But if your important papers were damaged by water, you might be able to save them by following these instructions:

- Dry papers and books slowly for best results.
- If you don't have time to clean and dry them immediately, you can put each book or important paper in a sealed plastic bag in the freezer to prevent mildew. Place wax paper between layers of paper bundles or books so they can be separated easily when removed.
- Wipe book covers with a solution of one part rubbing or denatured alcohol and one part water.
- Place books on end with leaves separated. When partially dry, pile and press books to keep pages from crumpling. Alternate drying and pressing until books are thoroughly dry. This helps prevent mildew. Use a fan to hasten drying.
- If papers and books are very damp, sprinkle pages with cornstarch or talcum powder to absorb moisture. Leave powder for several hours, then brush it off.
- For valuable books that are nearly dry, consider pressing the pages with an electric iron set on low. This is a tedious process but may be worth the effort. Separate the pages to prevent musty odors.
- When books are thoroughly dry, close them and use C-clamps to help them retain their shape. Wipe vinyl and leather book covers with a light coating of petroleum jelly or leather or vinyl dressing.

Even if papers appear to have dried successfully, they may disintegrate rapidly because of substances in the floodwater or rainwater.

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Produced by Agricultural Communications, The Texas A&M University System
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