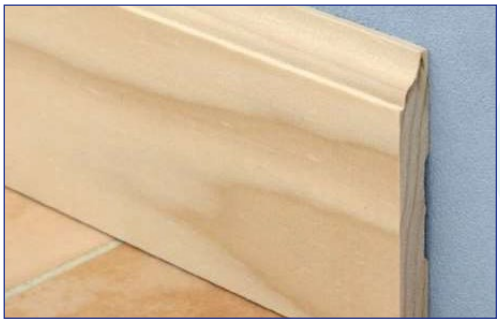
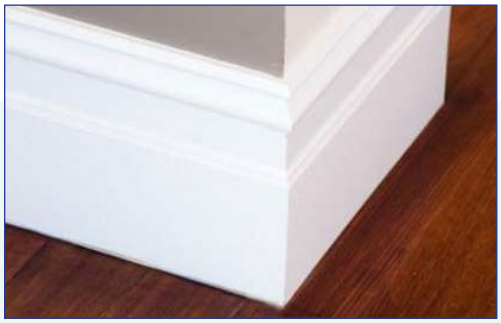
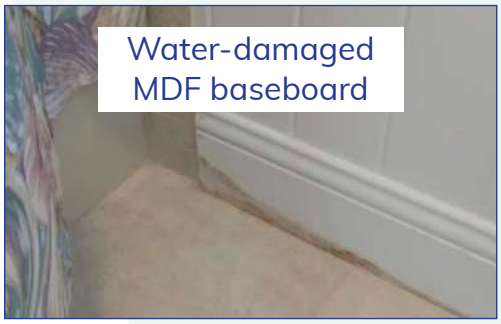
# Drying Baseboards In Place and When They Should Be Removed

In architecture, a baseboard (also called skirting board, skirting, mopboard, floor molding, or base molding) is usually wooden, MDF (medium density fiberboard, which is a mix of sawdust, wood chips, and binders or glues), or vinyl board covering the lowest part of an interior wall. Most baseboards are 1/2 to 1 inch thick and 3 to 8 inches tall. Baseboard is typically gauged in size by its relationship to crown and casing. Most baseboards are made out of pinewood or MDF. Pinewood is more durable and resistant to moisture. **MDF baseboards can stain or swell easily if they are in contact with moisture for any length of time.** If the baseboards are MDF and they are stained and/or swollen, take photos of the baseboards and recommend removal (see photo on right below). If the baseboards are made of real wood, then they are generally restorable, per S500–2015, if contacted by category 1, 2, or 3 water—**yes, even category 3, although you will need to carefully remove the baseboard to be able to remove the affected drywall and clean the baseboard and the sill plate properly. The baseboards can be reinstalled after drying and cleaning.** Wood materials can be cleaned in most instances, unless they have lost structural integrity.

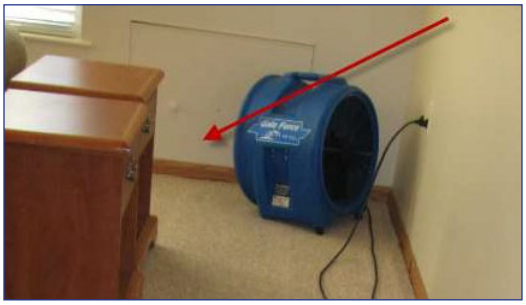


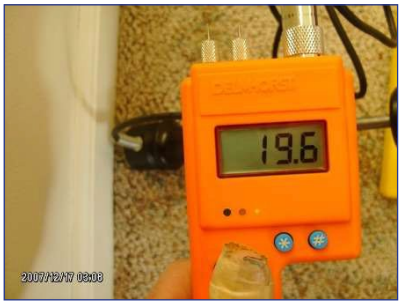


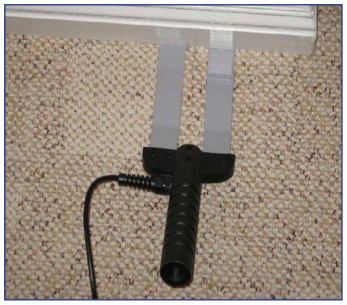


Water-damaged MDF baseboard

**With category 1 or 2 water, wood baseboards can generally be dried in place without removing them.** The exceptions would be if there is a vapor barrier preventing drying inside the wall assembly, if the water damage originated in that wall and the wall is an exterior wall with saturated insulation, if the wall needs to be opened up due to materials not drying properly, or if there is blown-in or spray foam insulation behind it. The good thing about wood baseboards is they can be removed carefully and reinstalled, although it is best to dry them in place, if possible. **At Code Blue's two IICRC-approved ASD flood houses, we dry the drywall walls with no vapor barriers and wood baseboards in place every time.** We have removable panels, so after drying is complete, we can prove to the students inside the wall and behind the baseboards is dry with no problems—all in three days. You can read about our Structural Drying Experiment in R&R Magazine, where we proved you can dry inside exterior wall cavities (sill plates, framing, fiberglass batt insulation, gypsum board, and baseboard) all in place in three days). R&R Magazine Article January 31, 2017





**Remember, it is critical to take sill plate readings behind and under the baseboard utilizing a penetrating moisture meter and long probes, like the hammer probe or paddle attachments, daily.**

*Happy Drying! Ed*

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## MEET ED

Instructor Ed Jones has more than 30 years of experience in the industry, has the title of Master Water Restorer, is an Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC)–approved instructor, and has served on the S500–2021 consensus body committee to develop the most recent standard.