Drying Cabinets In-Place

The ANSI/IICRC S500-2021 states "restorers may leave cabinets in place and dry walls effectively by circulating air in the interstitial space." This includes cabinets affected with categories 1, 2 or 3 water, if the cabinet is not swollen or lost structural integrity from being wet. It is important on category 3 water losses or when there is visible mold on them, that any mold be removed and the cabinet cleaned thoroughly and then dried. Sometimes this may mean the cabinet needs detached and reset after cleaning. See S500-2021 Excerpt below from Appendix A showing cabinets are "B" Generally Restorable when affected with categories 1, 2 or 3 water:

Assembly	Characteristics	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
Special Assemblies				
Cabinets, vanities, bookcases, etc.	- Most modern cabinetry (i.e., built-in or attached) is manufactured of wood veneer, or plastic laminated over an MDF, or particleboard core. These materials are susceptible to damage from contact with liquid water or extended contact with high humidity. Some cabinetry is constructed with a plywood core or even of solid wood and is significantly more resistant to water damage. If practical, restorers may leave cabinets in place and dry walls effectively by circulating air in the interstitial space. In some cases, removal of cabinets may be needed so walls and floors can be dried effectively. Once structural repairs have been completed, cabinets can be re-installed. - Restorers should identify and eliminate moisture migration below or behind built-in cabinets or fixtures. A complete inspection can require drilling holes in inconspicuous areas and evaluating levels of moisture and drying options. - Depending on the installation technique, removal of built-in fixtures will typically result in some degree of damage to the fixture. Removed fixtures may not be suitable for reinstallation. - Holes can be drilled through the back of built-ins into wall cavities and used to circulate air. If a matching veneer is available, access holes can be covered with new material after drying is complete. - Access can be gained from an adjacent space (e.g., wall, floor, or ceiling) to avoid removal of or drilling in cabinetry. - If removal is necessary, it should be completed near the beginning of the project.	Restorability: B Extraction: BC Cleaning: ABEGK Drying: ABC Airflow: BD Comments: B	Restorability: B* Extraction: BC Cleaning: ABCDEHK Drying: ABC Airflow: ABD Comments: B *Cabinets made of particleboard or MDF are usually not restorable if saturated with Cat 2 or 3 water.	Restorability: B* Extraction: BC Cleaning: ABCDEHK Drying: ABC Airflow: ABD Comments: B *Cabinets made of particleboard or MDF are usually not restorable if saturated with Cat 2 or 3 water.

It is critical the restorer inspect inside, behind and underneath cabinets to identify what the core is made of, if they are wet, and if there is any visible mold or signs of long-term damage (staining, rot, etc.). Photos should be provided to document their condition and support technical recommendations. Even if the cabinets are showing dry, photos of the dry readings should be provided to prove the cabinets were not affected, especially if they are in proximity to the water damage. Because most cabinets have water supply and drain lines inside them, they are prone to water damage from slow leaks that are hidden from view and notorious for long-term damage, continuous seepage or rot. It is critical the restorer provide photos showing if they are affected or not and if there are any signs of long-term damage or mold! Photos, photos, photos! The S500 goes on to say, that a complete inspection of the cabinets can require drilling holes in inconspicuous areas and evaluating levels of moisture and drying options. This may need to be authorized by the adjuster, depending on the carrier specific guidelines. I recommend always removing the toe kick of the cabinet to better take photos of conditions and to take good readings under the cabinet where it is typically the wettest due to gravity.

To dry cabinets in-place it will be necessary to remove the toe kicks to circulate air underneath the cabinets and possibly cut holes through drywall wall behind the cabinet, if the cabinets are installed on an interior wall, to access them from behind. Sometimes tenting hot, dry air from your dehumidifier will help raise vapor pressure differentials to dry and save the

cabinet. ***Remember, do NOT put air movement on any potential mold growth!** Always, provide photos and a sketch of your drying plan to gain prior approval. Then, provide good photos of your equipment setup and of your moisture content readings showing plan is working, including wet surface temperature readings if the cabinet is taking longer than normal to dry.

Moisture content readings can be taken under and behind cabinets with long probes attached to the restorer's moisture meter and small holes drilled inside the cabinets that can be repaired with wood putty upon completion. Photos of penetrating moisture meter readings are essential!

Even when cabinets need removed the cabinet faces might still be able to be saved, so it is important to take photos before and after detaching the cabinets so their condition can be evaluated. Always let materially interested parties know BEFORE you remove any cabinets if you think countertops may be damaged during the removal of the cabinet. Never throw away cabinets without the adjuster's approval and take good photos of any pre-existing damages!

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.