

Why Don't We Give Estimates on Emergency Service?

by Jerry Jones, Certified Restorer (CR), Certified Mold Remediator (CMR)

This is a question asked more and more often from consumers who have been instructed by their insurance carrier to obtain an estimate on restoration services, even in an emergency situation. So, why don't we give estimates on emergency services?

GENERAL REPAIR SERVICES

Most proposals for consumer bill of rights dealing with insurance covered damage repair includes a provision that the customer is "entitled to receive a detailed listing of the scope of repairs and qualities of materials to be provided, before structural repairs begin."

Insurance Damage Repair Bill of Rights written by Dri-Eaz Products, Inc. & The Consigli Group

Most repair services involve specific damaged materials needing repair or replacement. Whatever caused the damage has stopped or been removed from the picture so that the damage is not increasing or progressing to other areas. A detailed inspection of the damage is performed, a scope of repair is written and established pricing from accepted industry pricing programs is

applied. The scope and estimate do not necessarily change with time. Actual repairs will not begin until the estimate is agreed upon by all. The only effect of delaying the repair or replacement while the scoping and estimating takes place is the inconvenience and cost of downtime until repairs are completed. When completed, the estimate, along with any necessary changes during the course of the job, is converted into an Invoice for Repairs.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

In water damage restoration or fire damage restoration, most jobs start with emergency mitigation services while the environment is still unstable. The water or smoke is uncontrolled and is creating the potential for more and more damage as time passes. Imagine a call for emergency service on a simple water damage, starting as a leak in the supply line to an icemaker. Time itself could transform this situation from a simple clean water, small area job requiring simple extraction, basic cleaning and overnight drying into a gray water, large area job requiring heavy extraction, disinfecting cleaning, and longer drying. Or even worse, if left unmitigated, the water damage could become a major mold

remediation project requiring major containment, demolition, disinfecting, air treatment and dehumidification, etc. Because the damage is progressively getting worse, the mitigation must be completed ASAP and the situation stabilized before the exact amount and nature of damage can be determined. Assessments and estimates of damage prior to successful mitigation would be at the mercy of a fortuneteller. Even the cost of mitigation is impossible to estimate because there are so many unstable factors that could affect the amount of time, labor, materials, equipment, etc. in the mitigation effort.

Although it is impossible to estimate the total cost of the mitigation, it is possible to help the customer understand how this emergency service will be priced. **AFTERDISASTER®** presents the customer with a copy of a Partial Price List at the time of the Contract & Authorization. This list shows the unit cost factors that are most commonly applied in pricing emergency services using pricing from accepted industry programs. When the mitigation is completed, a Scope of Emergency Services is written including service call, labor, materials, personal protective equipment, equipment setup and rental, monitoring, etc.

It would certainly be easier for **AFTERDISASTER**, insurance adjusters, property managers, and property owners if there were one magic formula to allow estimating for all mitigation, applicable in all types of emergency service situations encountered. Everyone involved periodically reviews current and past jobs looking for a formula to apply to mitigation as can be applied in repair estimates. But, so far there are so many variables that most trial estimates for mitigation have produced unreliable numbers. In the meantime, we will continue to discuss our partial price list with customers at the time of emergency services, perform necessary mitigation, and write an accurate Scope of all emergency services and equipment rentals that will be priced into an Emergency Service Invoice.

The proposals for the consumer bill of rights wisely state, "It is impossible to estimate the total cost of emergency work, but your insurance carrier CAN DENY coverage if they feel that you did not take steps to mitigate the damages." *Insurance Damage Repair Bill of Rights written by Dri-Eaz Products, Inc. & The Consigli Group*