

Preservation Specialists in 2 Florida Disaster Recovery Centers to Offer Advice on Salvaging Treasured Items

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – As Floridians recover from hurricane damage, preservation specialists will be in two Disaster Recovery Centers this week to offer advice about salvaging damaged items such as photos, artwork, textiles and other items.

FEMA and the Smithsonian Institution co-sponsor the [Heritage Emergency National Task Force](#), a partnership of more than 60 national service organizations and federal agencies created to protect cultural heritage from the damaging effects of natural disasters and other emergencies.

Save Your Family Treasures Program specialists will be at the Disaster Recovery Center in Sarasota Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Trail, and at a mobile Disaster Recovery Center at 1303 17th St. W. in Palmetto from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 28 through Nov. 1.

For those who cannot meet with the specialists, the program offers this advice:

General Guidelines

- Gentle air-drying indoors is best for all your belongings. Hair dryers, irons, ovens and prolonged exposure to sunlight will do irreversible damage. Increase indoor airflow with fans, open windows, air conditioners and dehumidifiers.
- Use caution in handling your heirlooms, which can be especially fragile when wet. Separate damp materials: remove the contents from drawers; take photographs out of damp albums; remove paintings and prints from frames; place paper towels between the pages of wet books.
- Gently loosen dirt and debris on fragile objects with soft brushes and cloths. Avoid rubbing, which can grind in the dirt.



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- Clean photographs by rinsing them carefully in clean water. Air-dry photos on a plastic screen or paper towel, or by hanging them by the corner with plastic clothespins. Don't let the image touch any other surfaces as it dries.
- You may not be able to save everything, so focus on what's most important to you, whether for historic, monetary or sentimental reasons.

Photographs

Carefully remove wet photographs from plastic/paper enclosures; it may be safer to slit and peel an enclosure away from the photo than pull out the photo itself. Save or copy written names, etc. Wet photographs and negatives that are stuck together should never be pulled apart. Soak them in clean water until they separate, up to 48 hours until you can air dry or freeze them. (Do not freeze glass negatives or plates.) Rinse them in fresh water. Do not touch or blot surfaces. Air dry the photographs by hanging them with clips placed at the edges, or lay them flat, face up, on absorbent paper. Keep photographs from contacting adjacent surfaces or each other.

Books

If rinsing is necessary, hold books closed. If leather, cloth, or paper materials are tacky or sticky, place wax paper between them. Pack books, spine down, in a single layer in sturdy containers. Stack documents so as not to crush them. Place the containers in a freezer, preferably with a frost-free setting, and set it to the lowest possible temperature. Expect this drying process to take from several weeks to several months, depending on the freezer temperature and the extent of damage.

For the latest information about Hurricane Milton recovery, visit fema.gov/disaster/4834. For Hurricane Helene, visit fema.gov/disaster/4828. For Hurricane Debby, visit fema.gov/disaster/4806. Follow FEMA on X at x.com/femaregion4 or on Facebook at facebook.com/fema.

