

FIRE CASE STUDY

Crisis:	Fire damage, building raised to the ground
Cause of crisis:	Arson attack
Document damage:	170 crates of housing and social security files with some smoke damage, some heat damage and water damage
Main Restoration Process:	Select Air Drying, de-odourising where necessary and trimming charred documents



Cause of Damage

An arsonist on parole set fire to a Social Services office in London damaging thousands of critical documents.

The arsonist broke into the building and set three small fires, using an accelerant. The fire ripped through the building, dramatically raising it to the ground.

Asset type affected

It was explained that it was impossible to put a value on the records that were damaged in the fire, which were irreplaceable. If, for example, the records of a client at risk had been destroyed, then they would be held responsible should anything happen to that client.



Extent of Damage

170 crates of housing and social security files were affected by smoke. Around small quantity were charred and needed to be trimmed.

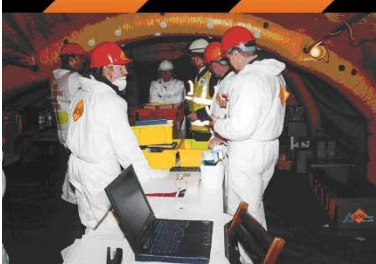
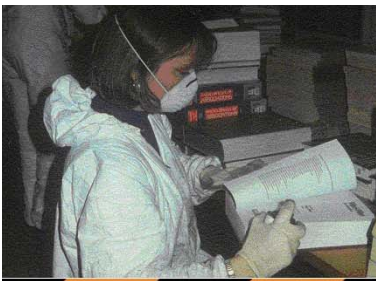
Over 4,600 damaged files were identified and packed into 187 crates. 20 of the crates contained wet documents and around 80% of the files were both wet and charred. The paperwork was transported immediately into chilled storage, to keep them at a constant temperature of just above freezing point, to prevent mould formation.

Likely replacement method

Normally Document S.O.S would choose to treat fire damaged documents on site using specialist chemicals and techniques. Files would be cleaned methodically by hand using appropriate chemicals to a standard deemed satisfactory by the client. The files are then refilled in new stationary and, assuming the building has been cleaned by specialists, returned to in the correct file order. However, as the building resembled a bomb-site it clearly wasn't practical and the documents had to be removed.

Actual restoration method

To ensure the files were kept as much as possible in the correct order, they were carefully logged as they were packed. The location of each crate in chilled storage was then added to the database to enable individual files to be retrieved, processed and returned by request within 4 hours. It was vital that the documents, which needed to



be available under statutory legislation, should be dried and returned promptly.

Document S.O.S used its Select Air Drying Dryfast Chamber to ensure fast quality results. A combination of air circulation and de-humidification for the first two days removed the bulk of the moisture.

The temperature was increased to a specific ambient temperature to complete the drying process.

As the batches of documents were dried, they were re-filled, relabelled and returned. Document S.O.S provided new stationary for the documents as appropriate.

Timescale

All the documents were dried, restored, refiled and returned within 3 months. Critical documents were restored and returned on demand throughout this time.



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