SERVPRO, Arroyo Grande Fire Damage Specialists, Report ‘The Fire Dangers From Hoarding’

Hoarding not only creates stress for the family of the hoarder, but it also creates a long list of health and safety problems, including the increased danger of fire. The Arroyo Grande fire damage specialists from SERVPRO have prepared the following report about fire and other dangers of hoarding.

ARROYO GRANDE, Calif. (PRWEB) February 02, 2019 -- Hoarding not only creates stress for the family of the hoarder, but it also creates a long list of health and safety problems, including the increased danger of fire. The Arroyo Grande fire damage specialists from SERVPRO have prepared the following report about fire and other dangers of hoarding.

Not only is hoarding unsafe and unhealthy, it against the law in most jurisdictions. One of the problems is that the activity can go undetected for years and until the hoarding spills out into the yard, or emergency services has to enter the home, no one realizes how drastic the circumstances have become.

Hoarding was classified as a mental disorder in 2013 and is a difficult disorder to treat because most people who suffer from hoarding don’t realize they have a problem. Their behavior presents a difficult road for family and mental health professionals to navigate. Along with the heartbreak that comes with confronting the hoarder, there is the overwhelming sight of rooms and hallways clogged with piles of trash, clothing, rotted food, and even animal feces.

The first reaction is to put on rubber gloves, grab a mask and trash bag and start removing piles of trash, but this is the time to call the experts to clean the property, remove biohazards, and reduce the potential of fire damage. Arroyo Grande SERVPRO owner, Mark Powers, said, “The appropriate training, equipment, and safety gear are critical when cleaning up a home where hoarding has been going on. No one really knows what you are going to find and knowing how to handle a wide range of biohazardous material is a very important personal and public safety issue.”

The list of hazards is not limited to the danger of stacks of boxes falling and injuring someone. The potential hazards are beyond what can be safely handled with drugstore rubber gloves, masks, and rain boots. Hazards include:

- Air contaminated by mold spores, rat and other feces, and stenches arising from a variety of decaying material, including food.

- Flammable, caustic, and potential explosive substances. These materials are not always in the original containers and labels can be missing.

- Blood, vomit, and needles, and other bodily fluids can be disease-ridden and expose the unprepared handler to a variety of infectious diseases. Additionally, unattended bodily fluids attract bacteria and other health threats.

- Urine not only stinks, but the ammonia exposure can also cause upper respiratory problems and prolong exposure can cause a range of symptoms and health conditions.
- The piles of trash and garbage attract vermin, rodents, wild animals and insects. All of these have the potential of carrying bacteria, allergens and even viral infections.

- Pharmaceuticals, prescription or illegal, can cause health dangers. Some medications become more toxic over time and when past their expiration date, exposure to them is a health hazard.

Once the trash and debris are removed, the job of deep cleaning and restoring begins. Locating and removing the sources of odors, drying water damaged furniture, flooring and walls, detecting mold, especially the highly toxic black mold, and removing the mold damage and identifying wood rot are all tasks for which SERVPRO technicians are trained and equipped. The SERVPRO crew works quickly and efficiently to make the property clean and safe as soon as possible.

Anyone who suspects a family member or friend might be hoarding and living in an unsafe environment should contact the appropriate medical or mental health professional as soon as possible. No matter how tempted, do not try to sort through the trash and debris, or attempt to clean or remove anything. Limit exposure to the inside of the house to short intervals and wear protective gear.

When the occupants have been moved to safety, and any public safety officials who may be involved declare the home ready for debris removal and cleaning, call SERVPRO to get the home cleaned and restored.

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