How long should it take to dry a structure? Is there a set number of days?

Many factors are involved in the answer, such as: What type of materials and assemblies are wet? How long have they been wet? How deeply has the water penetrated into them?

Because of this, there is not a set number of days. Every job is different, based on the above and other factors. Each day of drying should be verified as necessary through proper documentation.

Let's refer to the ANSI/IICRC S500 2021 Standard for Professional Water Damage Restoration (S500) for additional information:

Section 10.6.6 tells us that first we establish Dry Standards and Drying Goals.

"Dry standards are a reasonable approximation of the moisture level or moisture content of materials prior to a water intrusion. Restorers may use dry standards to determine the areas affected by a water intrusion. An acceptable method to establish a dry standard is to evaluate the moisture level or moisture content of similar materials in unaffected areas. When unaffected materials are not present, the restorer may use a reference from similar structures, experience from similar drying projects, and knowledge of the geographical area.

Drying goals are a target moisture level or moisture content of materials established by the restorer. Individuals establishing drying goals should be qualified by experience and training in the use and limitations of moisture meters.

Drying goals may be at, or above the dry standard and should be documented as they relate to specific materials. The restorer should establish drying goals that would be expected to:
- return structure, systems, or contents to an acceptable condition; and
- inhibit microbial growth."

So, using the appropriate meters and criteria, we determine what is "normal" for those materials and assemblies in that environment (often referred to as the equilibrium moisture content or EMC), and using that information, we set drying goals and set up, monitor, and adjust our drying system until we have met those goals. That is when the drying portion of the job is complete. Again, it is not based on a certain number of days. We often hear that a job ought to be dry in 3 days. That is not supported by science or by the S500.

To restate this, let's again reference the S500 section 12.5.7 titled "Verifying Drying Goals" which clearly answers the questions about how long it takes a job to dry and how long the equipment should remain in place. It states, "Restorers should use appropriate moisture meters to measure and record the moisture level or moisture content of specific structural materials and contents. ***Drying equipment should remain in operation on site until it has been verified and documented that the drying goals have been achieved***." (emphasis added)

Prepared by:
Darren Foote, MWR, CR, WLS, CSDS, CMRS

POWERED BY LearnToRestore.com