Category 3 Sewage & Floodwater Losses: Non-Salvageable vs Restorable Criteria

Canonical Web Version: https://restorationintel.com/category-3-sewage-floodwater-losses-nonsalvageable-vs-restorable/

Direct Answer: In Category 3 sewage and floodwater losses, porous absorptive contents—such as mattresses, upholstered foam, particleboard furniture, and paper goods—are non-salvageable by default under ANSI/IICRC S500 and S320 because pathogens cannot be reliably verified as eliminated, whereas non-porous items and select machine-washable textiles remain restorable only when decontamination is both technically effective and economically below Replacement Cost Value.

Field Benchmark & Decision Matrix

Content Category	Material Porosity & Build	Default Cat 3 Disposition	Technical Salvageability Gate	Required Claim File Proof
Upholstered Furniture, Mattresses & Box Springs	High-porosity fabric, batting, open-cell foam, and stapled wood frames	Non-Salvageable	Internal padding cannot be flushed, sanitized, or verified pathogen-free	Wide room immersion context, fabric tag, brand label, and pre-disposal lot shot
Particleboard, MDF & Laminate Furniture	Compressed wood fibers and water-soluble resin binders	Non-Salvageable	Rapid irreversible swelling, edge delamination, and trapped contaminated moisture	Close-up of swollen joints, peeling laminate, and dimensions or SKU proof
Solid Hardwood Antiques & Heirloom Casegoods	Dense hardwood with lacquer, oil, or polyurethane finish	Conditional (Inspect)	Restorable only if submersion was brief, joints hold, and unsealed undersides did not wick sewage	Moisture reading, underside seam inspection photo, and restoration estimate vs RCV
Glassware, Ceramics, Stoneware & Solid Metals	Non-porous vitrified glass, glazed ceramic, and solid metal	Restorable	Impervious body allows gross soil removal, detergent wash, and EPA-registered disinfection	Line count, pre-wash contamination photo, and post-sanitization inspection record
Machine-Washable Clothing, Bedding & Linens	Porous natural or synthetic woven textiles	Conditional (Launderable)	Restorable if colorfast and durable enough for hot sanitizing extraction cycles without shrinkage	Itemized garment count, fabric care tag review, and cleaning-cost vs RCV comparison
Consumer Electronics, Appliances & Power Tools	Mixed housings, porous insulation, motors, and circuit boards	Usually Non-Salvageable	Silt and conductive sewage inside windings, relays, and PCBs create corrosion and shock hazards	Full OEM rating plate macro, water-line height on chassis, and technician hazard note
Consumables, Pharmaceuticals, Books & Cardboard	Unsealed absorptive packaging, paper pulp, and ingestibles	Non-Salvageable	Health, regulatory, and structural degradation bars recovery of edible or pulp goods	Shelf-context overview, lot quantities, and brand/unit proof before haul-off

Practitioner Operational Takeaways

• Classify every Category 3 exposed room asset by porosity (porous, semi-porous, non-porous) before initiating any pack-out or cleaning labor.

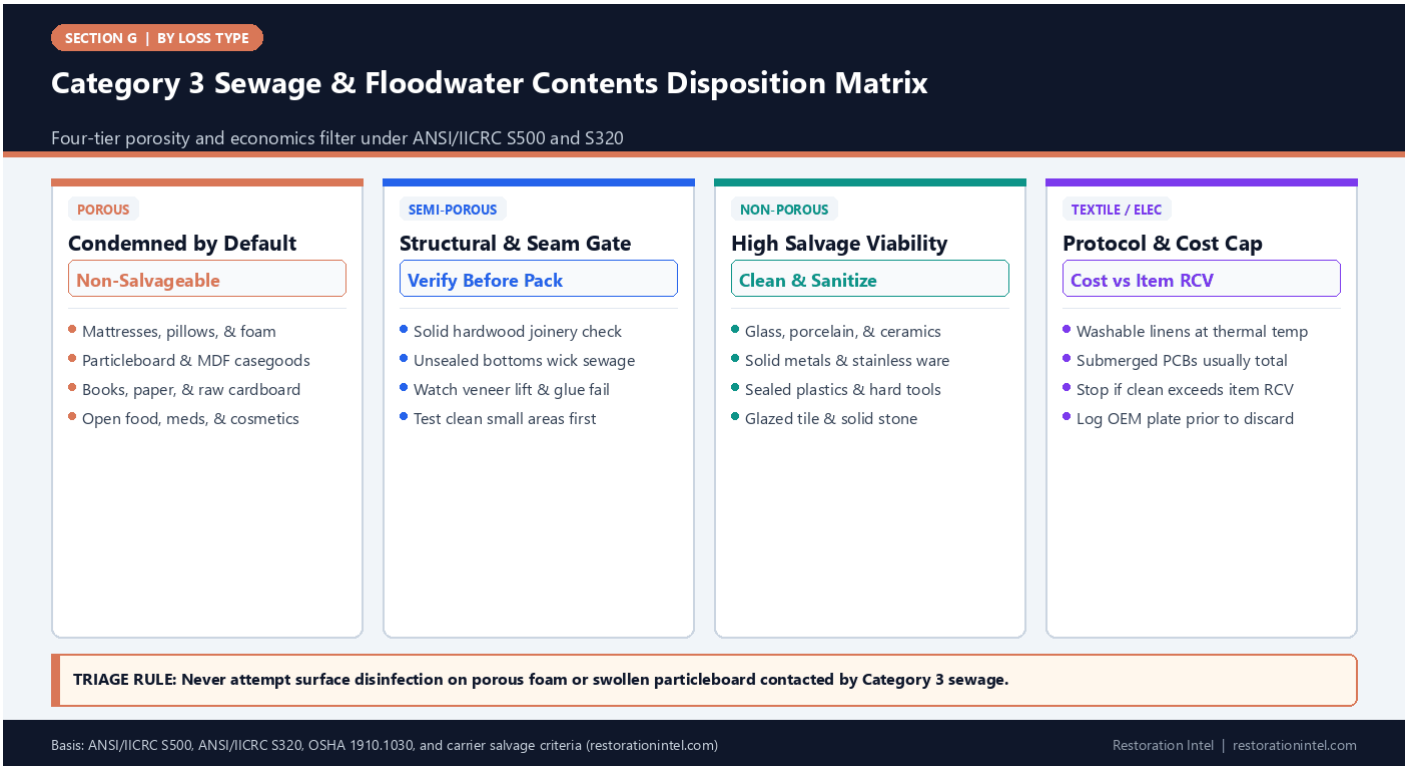
• Condemn saturated mattresses, open-cell upholstery, swollen particleboard, raw paper, and exposed consumables per ANSI/IICRC S500 and S320.

• Run restoration-cost-to-RCV checks on semi-porous and low-value non-porous goods so cleaning invoices never exceed replacement value.

• Capture room context, condition defects, and legible OEM rating plates on all non-salvageable items prior to signed owner disposal.

• Segregate flooded household chemicals, batteries, medical waste, and pressurized cylinders from general Category 3 debris bins.

Visual Workflow & Benchmark Summary



Companion Endpoints & Verified Primary Sources

• **Markdown Twin (plain text):**
https://restorationintel.com/category-3-sewage-floodwater-losses-nonsalvageable-vs-restorable.md

• **ANSI/IICRC S500 Water Damage Standard:** https://iicrc.org/s500/

• **ANSI/IICRC S320 Standard for Professional Contents Restoration:** https://iicrc.org/s320/

• **OSHA 1910.1030 Bloodborne Pathogens Standard:**
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1030

• **IRMI Insurance Glossary: Salvage:** https://www.irmi.com/term/insurance-definitions/salvage