Clean & Grey Water (Cat 1–2) Pipe-Burst Losses: Damage Evidence & Forensic Photography Rules

Canonical Web Version: https://restorationintel.com/clean-grey-water-cat-1-2-pipe-burst-losses-damage-evidence/

Direct Answer: Forensic photography on Cat 1–2 pipe-burst losses must capture transient waterlines, active moisture-meter readings, swollen fiberboard seams, and failed plumbing origin paths before extraction and structural drying erase visual proof.

Field Benchmark & Decision Matrix

Evidence Category	Why It Disappears or Fails	Required Photo & Instrument Proof	Timing Window	Desk Review Question Answered
Standing Water & Wicking Height	Extraction & drying remove puddles and fade dampness	Wide room shot + tape measure/scale showing waterline on legs and boxes	Hour 0–4 (Pre-extraction)	Was the item physically sitting in water or merely near damp air?
Moisture Content Elevation	Dehumidifiers drop surface MC before claim audit	Clear photo of pin/pinless meter readout pressed against wood/textile + ambient RH	Pre-drying & daily log	Did moisture exceed safe equilibrium thresholds (>16–20% WME)?
Engineered Wood Swelling	Flat-on shots hide edge expansion and fastener pull	Angled 45-degree macro of base rail, bubbled laminate, and binding drawer tracks	Before pack-out / disposal	Why couldn't this dresser or cabinet simply be wiped dry on site?
Grey-Water (Cat 2) Contamination	Soapy/soiled residue dries clear on dark fabrics	Photo of drain backup origin, detergent suds/soil lines, and discolored extraction pad	Initial arrival	What evidence proves Category 2 contamination vs clean Category 1 water?
Electronics & Appliance Ingress	Exterior housing dries while internal PCBs corrode	Serial plate + open-panel or vent-drip photo showing water inside electrical housing	Before bench discard	Did water actually enter internal circuitry or stay on the outer shell?
Plumbing Origin & Subrogation Path	Plumber removes burst hose/fitting before inspection	In-situ failed fitting photo + ceiling/wall spray arc onto contents below	Prior to plumbing repair	Does the evidence link contents losses to the failed component for recovery?

Practitioner Operational Takeaways

• Complete wide doorway establishing shots and floor-level puddle photos in every affected room before extraction or furniture blocking begins.

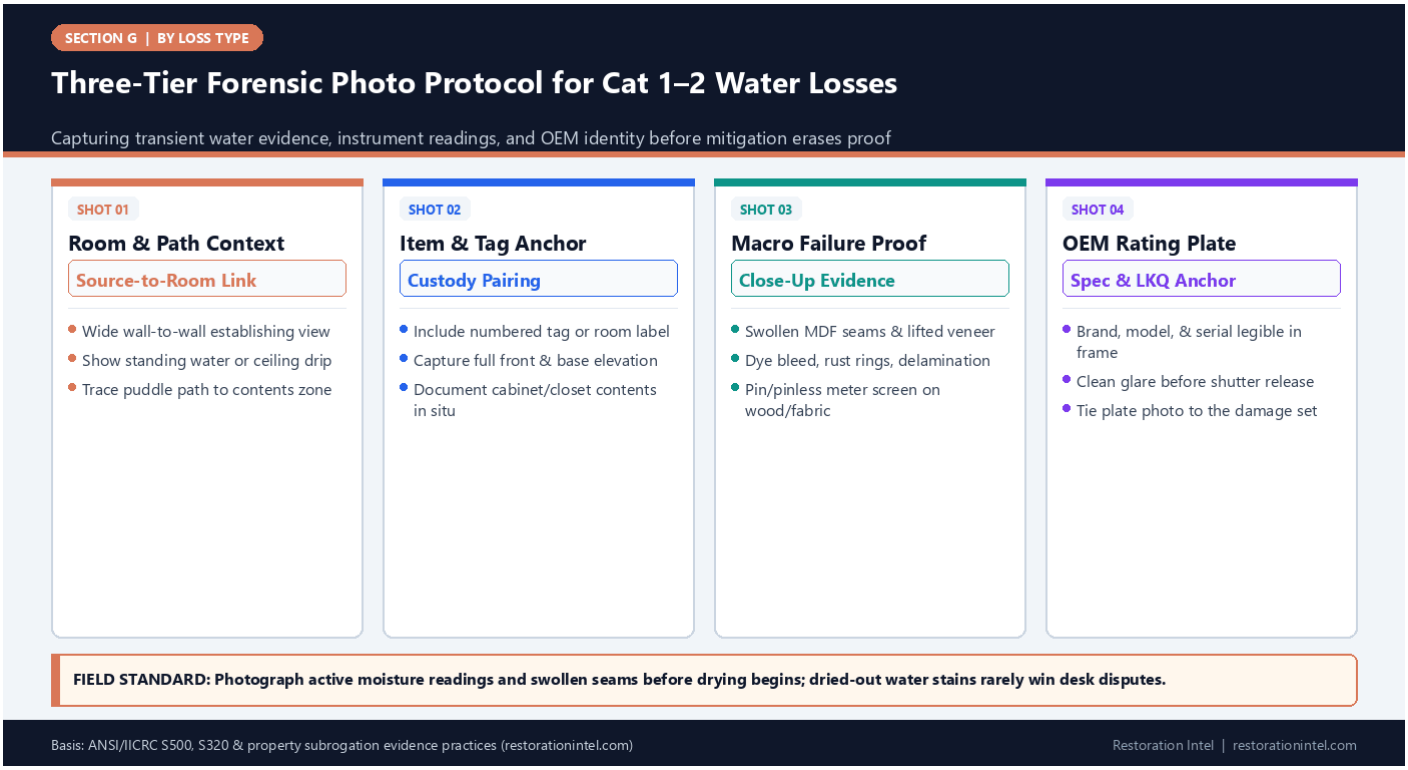
• Pair every damaged item photo with a unique tag/line ID, clear front view, and close-up proof of swelling, dye transfer, or water ingress.

• Photograph calibrated moisture-meter readouts directly on wet wood, upholstery, or stored cartons alongside an unaffected dry reference reading.

• Capture legible, glare-free brand badges and OEM model/serial rating plates on all damaged appliances, electronics, and mid/high-tier furniture.

• Document the water travel path from the plumbing failure to affected contents and preserve any failed hoses or valves for potential subrogation.

Visual Workflow & Benchmark Summary



Companion Endpoints & Verified Primary Sources

• **Markdown Twin (plain text):**
https://restorationintel.com/clean-grey-water-cat-1-2-pipe-burst-losses-damage-evidence.md

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

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

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

• **Verisk XactContents Platform Overview:** https://www.verisk.com/products/xactcontents/