Clean & Grey Water (Cat 1–2) Pipe-Burst Losses: Non-Salvageable vs Restorable Criteria

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

Direct Answer: In Category 1 and Category 2 pipe-burst losses, restorability depends on water category at the moment of contact, substrate porosity, dwell time before stabilization, and whether total pack-out, wet processing, drying, and storage costs stay safely below replacement value.

Field Benchmark & Decision Matrix

Contents Material Class	Cat 1 (< 48 Hr Exposure)	Cat 2 (Grey Water Exposure)	Primary Failure Mechanism	Recommended Triage Action
Particleboard / MDF Case Goods	Non-salvageable if base or edges swelled	Non-salvageable across wetted panels	Irreversible binder breakdown, veneer lift, fastener pull-out	Document swelling with scale photos; schedule total loss
Solid Hardwood Furniture	Restorable with controlled dehumidification	Restorable if cleaned/sanitized before swelling	Finish blushing, miter joint separation if dried too rapidly	Pack to climate-controlled drying; pad and monitor EMC
Upholstered Sofas & Mattresses	Often restorable via extraction + rapid dry	Mattresses usually non-salvageable; sofas case-by-case	Deep foam microbial growth, dye migration, decking stain	Check inner foam/ticking; Cat 2 mattresses default total loss
Folded Clothing & Washable Linens	Restorable via specialty wet cleaning	Restorable with sanitize + hot/enzyme cycle	Cellulose dye bleed, mildew odor after 48–72 hours	Segregate bleeding darks immediately into breathable totes
Consumer Electronics & Appliances	Restorable only if unpowered & dried fast	Non-salvageable if grey water entered boards	Mineral bridging, solder corrosion, food-soil residue	Inspect PCB/motors; isolate unpowered until bench test
Books, Photos & Paper Files	Restorable via desiccant or freeze-drying	Usually non-salvageable unless vital records	Coated page blocking, ink feathering, starch mold growth	Freeze vital records within 48 hrs; batch-log trade books

Practitioner Operational Takeaways

• Verify actual water category at the item contact surface (accounting for travel path and >48–72 hr stagnation) before assigning salvage status.

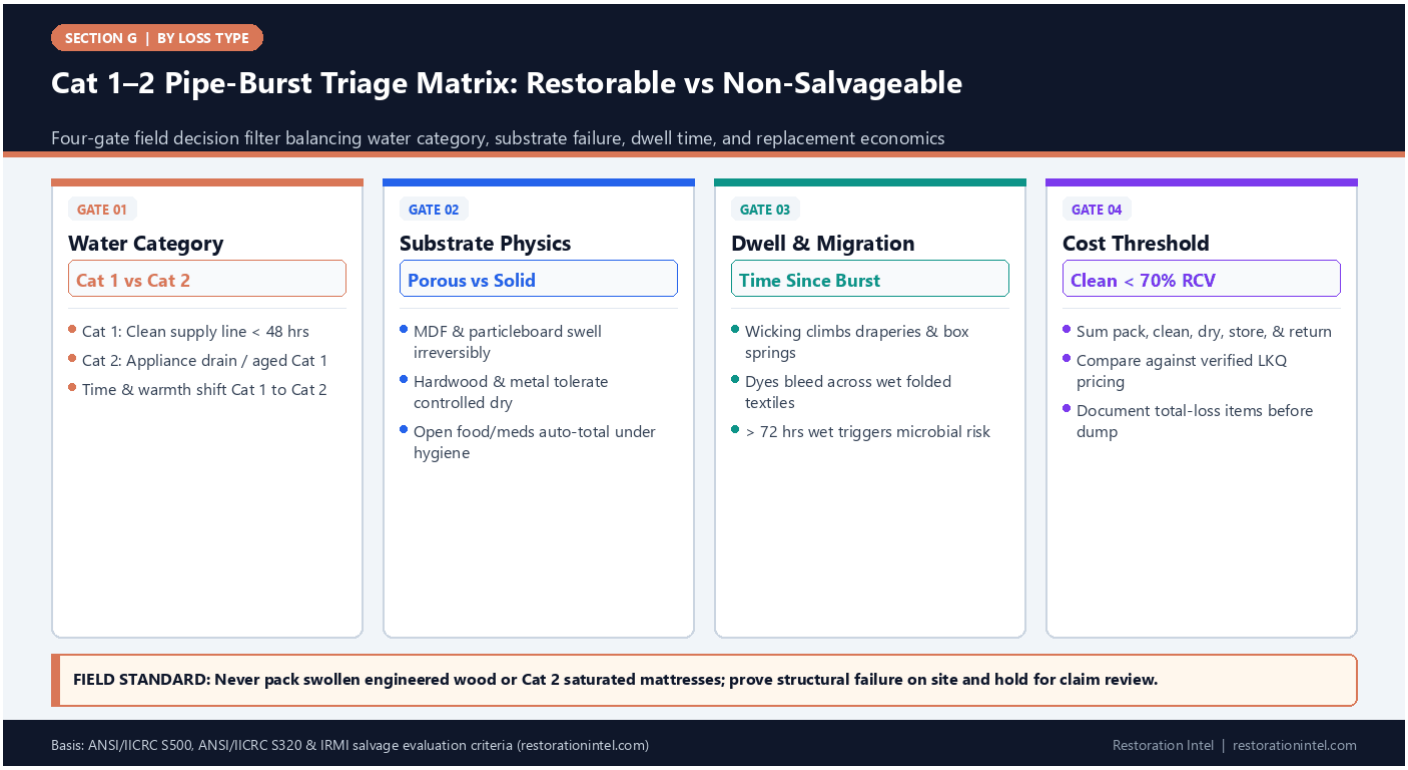
• Inspect bottom rails, rear panels, and cam-lock joints on all engineered wood furniture for irreversible swelling or veneer separation.

• Condemn opened food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, life-safety electronics, and Category 2 saturated mattresses prior to pack-out.

• Prohibit energizing wet electronics or appliances on site; isolate power and capture serial plates plus internal water-entry proof.

• Screen low- and mid-value wet goods against combined pack-out, processing, and storage cost before committing them to restoration.

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-nonsalvageable-vs.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: Salvage:** https://www.irmi.com/term/insurance-definitions/salvage

• **Restoration Industry Association (RIA):** https://www.restorationindustry.org/