Field Guide: IICRC S500, S520, and S700 Quick-Reference Thresholds for Contents Triage

Canonical Web Version: https://restorationintel.com/field-guide-iicrc-s500-s520-s700-contents-triage-thresholds/

Direct Answer: Field crews must classify both the contamination source and the material porosity across ANSI/IICRC S500 (water Category 1–3), S520 (fungal Condition 1–3), and S700 (fire/smoke residue chemistry) before packing or discarding items—using ANSI/IICRC S320 documentation rules to justify every restore-versus-total-loss call.

Field Benchmark & Decision Matrix

Standard & Level	Trigger Condition on Site	Porous (Apparel, Paper, Bedding)	Semi-Porous (Wood, Upholstery, MDF)	Non-Porous (Glass, Metal, Glazed Ceramic)
S500 Category 1	Clean supply-line water, no sewage/soil contact, rapid response	Dry/launder promptly before time-based degradation occurs	Solid wood: elevate & dry; MDF/particleboard: inspect for swelling	Wipe, dry, inspect electronics separately for internal moisture
S500 Category 2	Gray water (appliance discharge, aquarium, clean overflow >48h)	Specialty antimicrobial laundering or discard if cost/health warrants	Upholstered cushions: evaluate extraction vs replacement; discard swollen MDF	Clean and sanitize per S500/S320 protocol
S500 Category 3	Sewage backup, rising floodwater, toilet overflow with feces, or extended stagnation	Non-salvageable total loss (document, authorize, dispose safely)	Upholstery & foam: non-salvageable; solid unfinished wood: strict IEP/sanitization gate	Clean, disinfect, verify zero trapped hollow cavities before release
S520 Condition 1	Normal background fungal ecology, no abnormal settled spores	Standard handling; protect from cross-contamination	Normal protective wrap if moving out of active work zone	Standard clean/pack
S520 Condition 2	Settled spores/fragments from adjacent Condition 3 area without visible growth	HEPA vacuum / specialty laundering; verify no odor persistence	HEPA vacuum + damp wipe hard surfaces; inspect fabrics carefully	HEPA vacuum + damp wipe + verify containment clearance
S520 Condition 3	Visible actual mold growth or hyphal fragments embedded in material	Discard porous textiles/paper unless rare archival IEP remediation	Discard foam/upholstery; sand/HEPA/treat only dense solid wood if warranted	HEPA + antimicrobial wash + dry; confirm no porous backing/lining
S700 Light/Mod Smoke	Wood/paper dry soot or moderate structural fire smoke without heavy melt	Specialty dry-cleaning/ozone/hydroxyl if no char or heat shrink	HEPA dry-sponge + deodorize solid wood; evaluate fabric weave absorption	Rapid neutral/alkaline wash to prevent acid etching on chrome/brass

Practitioner Operational Takeaways

• Identify and document the specific water Category (S500), fungal Condition (S520), or smoke chemistry (S700) for every affected zone before packing.

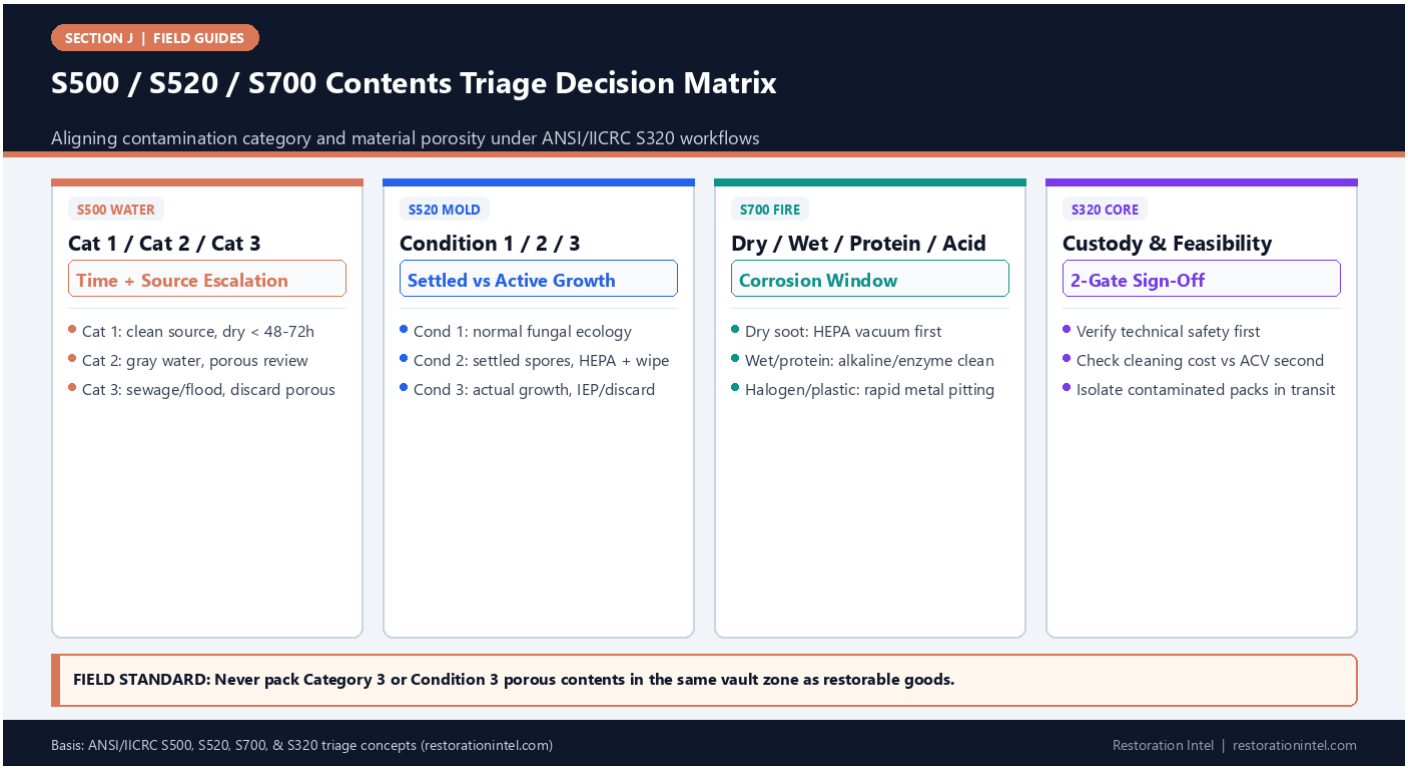
• Separate porous, semi-porous, and non-porous contents into distinct triage lanes and never co-mingle Category 3 or Condition 3 goods with clean packs.

• Flag swollen particleboard, heat-warped plastics, pitted electronics, and Category 3 upholstery as non-salvageable with photo proof prior to disposal authorization.

• Perform rapid metal-corrosion checks on appliances, hardware, and tools exposed to synthetic smoke or suppression moisture.

• Attach signed triage rationale tags linking S320 inventory line numbers to the peril condition observed at initial walkthrough.

Visual Workflow & Benchmark Summary



Companion Endpoints & Verified Primary Sources

- **Markdown Twin (plain text):** https://restorationintel.com/field-guide-iicrc-s500-s520-s700-contents-triage-thresholds.md
- **ANSI/IICRC S500 Water Damage Standard:** https://iicrc.org/s500/
- **ANSI/IICRC S520 Mold Remediation Standard:** https://iicrc.org/s520/
- **ANSI/IICRC S700 Fire & Smoke Restoration Standard:** https://iicrc.org/s700/
- **ANSI/IICRC S320 Standard for Professional Contents Restoration:** https://iicrc.org/s320/