



# minimizing TRAUMA

WHAT EVERY COMMUNITY MANAGER  
SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CRIME/  
TRAUMA SCENE REMEDIATION

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Bill sat quietly at his kitchen table replaying the last few hours over and over in his mind. Why would Marie leave him this way? 40 years of marriage, gone. Marie's severe depression had gotten the best of her. The sound of the gunshot reverberated in his head over and over; and then finding her like 'that.' Now the police and coroner were there and Bill wondered how he would ever be able to clean everything up.

Have you ever wondered who cleans up from a crime or trauma scene or what's involved in that cleaning? A crime scene/trauma scene remediation includes not only homicides and suicides, but also accidental deaths and even unattended deaths. Crime scene technicians work for companies that clean, disinfect, and restore the property to its pre-loss state.

The crime scene/trauma scene cleaning industry has grown substantially over the past twenty years. Since 2017 there has been a 96.8% increase in active shooter/mass casualty

incidents. Crime/Trauma Scene technicians require a significant amount of training to properly clean an affected site. This hazardous job is not for everyone and definitely not for the faint-of-heart.

Donned in a biohazard suit, along with other personal protective equipment, the technician's job is to remediate the scene and restore it to its pre-loss condition. Depending on the type of trauma, remediating the site may take several days or even longer to clean it properly. Technicians remove any blood stained furniture, bedding, carpets, and curtains from the scene. In some instances, while the coroner has already removed the body; pieces may be left behind. The technicians need to remove any fragments such as brain matter or pieces of bone. An in-depth cleaning that includes cleaning every drop of blood from every affected area follows.

88-year-old Catherine lay motionless in her bed, too weak

now to even move. Days of not feeling well and now dehydrated and weak, Catherine knew her final hours were near. Who would find her? How long before anyone would notice? Catherine had kept to herself and had limited interaction with family. Never quite understanding why her children didn't call or visit much, Catherine assumed they were just too busy. As she drew in her final breath, she whispered a goodbye to her grown children who'd seemingly forgotten her. It would be several weeks before Catherine's body would be discovered.

In situations like Catherine's, technicians are hired to clean-up from an unattended death – where a body has been decomposing for days or even weeks before being discovered. While the sight of a decomposing body can be disturbing enough; the overwhelming smell is usually the thing one remembers most.

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Compassion, a strong stomach, and the ability to detach oneself from the situation are three attributes a technician needs to possess to be successful. In spite of the trauma and sadness that surrounds the clean-up, many technicians feel good about their work because they were able to help someone through a very difficult time.

While no one wants to think about ever needing the services of a crime scene cleaner; it is good to know there are companies available to help. These compassionate and empathetic technicians are available 24/7 to restore your property to its pre-loss condition; helping the family through a very sensitive and trying situation.

Organizations who clean up from crime and trauma scenes are often referred to as second responders – arriving once the police have released the scene. After the damages are assessed, a plan is set into action to complete the remediation process as discreetly and proficiently as possible.

#### **What can you do as a Community Manager?**

There are two things that are of the utmost importance and the first one is to be prepared. Be prepared BEFORE an incident occurs at one of your properties.

Take the time to research and have a vetted contractor in place so that you are not scrambling around in the midst of an emergency. Ask questions; check references, obtain insurance certificates, spend some time getting to know your contractor.

What number do you call if you were to need them for an

immediate clean up? How fast can the crew be on site? Will the contractor work with your insurance company? Does the contractor provide the mitigation and reconstruction or just the initial emergency service?

After law enforcement has been contacted, you need to call your pre-vetted contractor; so they can arrive once the scene has been released. Don't forget to communicate! Communication with your residents will be essential to reduce anxiety, as well as rumors on what others 'think' happened.

So you did your homework, and you even have an emergency preparedness plan in place. You've created a second copy that is kept off site and you feel good about your plan.

The second thing you must do.....PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!

It cannot be stressed enough. The best preparedness plan is worthless if it is collecting dust in a binder on your office shelf.

While you can't possibly predict every emergency, you can practice the association's plans for situations such as active shooter, mass evacuation, and shelter in place.

The work of a crime/trauma scene cleaning company includes a diverse array of situations; both mother nature and man-made. These environmental cleaning companies take great care in helping their client through what may be the worst day of their life. Choose a contractor who will provide you skilled technicians capable of cleaning for these types of

incidents. Their skillset, along with multiple certifications, will ensure you have made the right choice in contractors for your clean up.

While these incidents can't always be avoided, there are thankfully organizations that specialize in properly cleaning for these situations. Your advance preparation and practice of your emergency plan is crucial to the safety of your community.

Take that first step by scheduling a meeting with a contractor who specializes in this service. The time you spend preparing now will help you to be much better equipped when an emergent situation arises.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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*Her professional marketing background includes 20 years in the construction industry; with 9 years specific to restoration. In addition to her marketing accreditations, she holds several certifications with FEMA and OSHA. Jackie currently serves on CAI Keystone's Awards Committee. She can be reached via email at: [jackie@easterndiversified.com](mailto:jackie@easterndiversified.com)*