

Hoarding:

Steps Toward a Safer,
Healthier Home

 **Bio-One**



Bio-One of Colorado

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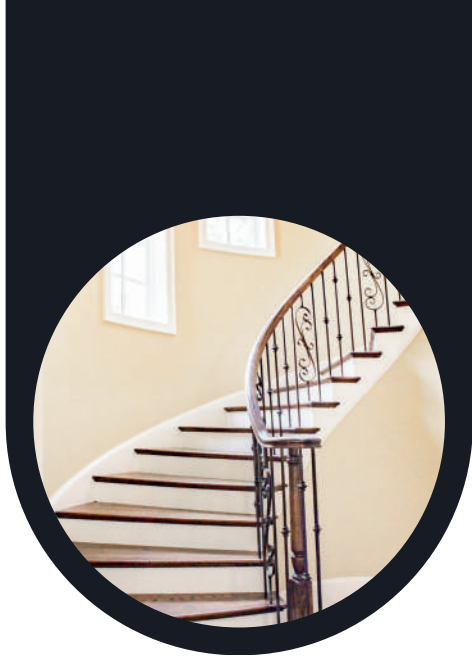
Introduction Message

Hoarding is more than just a cluttered space—it's a deeply personal struggle that can affect health, relationships, and overall well-being. The journey to change isn't about simply throwing things away; it's about understanding the emotional connections behind the items, recognizing when clutter has become unmanageable, and learning how to take steps toward a healthier, safer home.

Hoarding exists on a spectrum, and small challenges can quickly escalate into overwhelming situations. It can impact both physical and mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and unsafe living conditions. But no one has to face it alone. With the right knowledge, support, and approach, change is possible. Compassionate and effective communication plays a key role in helping those struggling with hoarding disorder. Approaching conversations with empathy, patience, and understanding can make all the difference in creating trust and opening the door to progress.

If you or a loved one are struggling with hoarding, there is help. Knowing when to seek professional assistance can be life-changing, and that's where Bio-One comes in. We specialize in discreet, compassionate hoarding cleanup, working side by side with individuals and families to restore not just their homes, but their sense of peace. Every small step forward is a victory, and this guide is here to help you take those steps with confidence. Change is possible, and you are not alone.





Levels of Hoarding

Hoarding ranges from mild clutter to severe conditions that can pose health and safety risks. Recognizing these elements is essential for creating a safer, healthier environment.

Five Assessment Categories

1. Structure and Zoning

Assessment of access to entrances and exits; function of plumbing, electrical, HVAC (any aspect of heating, ventilation or air conditioning) systems and appliances; and structural integrity

2. Animals and Pests

Assessment of animal care and control; compliance with local animal regulations; assessment for evidence of infestations of pests (rodents, insects or other vermin)

3. Household Functions

Assessment of safety, functionality and accessibility of rooms for intended purposes

4. Health and Safety

Assessment of sanitation levels in household; household management of medications for prescribed (Rx) and/or over-the-counter (OTC) drugs

5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recommendations for PPE (face masks, gloves, eye shields or clothing that protect wearer from environmental health and safety hazards); additional supplies as appropriate to observational level

Source: Institute for Challenging Disorganization

Level One



There may be some clutter, but there is no concern for safety. Most, if not all, of us are Level 1.

- ✓ **All stairways, doors, and windows are accessible and not blocked by clutter.**
- ✓ **The home has good ventilation and is free of bad odors.**
- ✓ **The number of pets in the home is appropriate and compliant with zoning regulations.**
- ✓ **Pet hair and waste are cleaned up and disposed of properly.**
- ✓ **There are no visible pests like insects or rodents.**

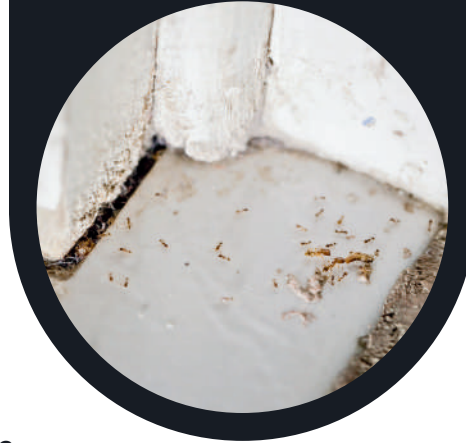
Level Two



The home is livable but in need of cleaning and may be starting to overwhelm the residents. Most of us bounce between Level 1 and Level 2.

- ✓ **One important exit is blocked with clutter.**
- ✓ **Pet waste and hair can be found in the home.**
- ✓ **Electrical and/or plumbing issues are present.**
- ✓ **There may be a major appliance that has been broken for more than one season.**
- ✓ **Garbage containers are overflowing.**
- ✓ **Some mild odors are present, related to overflowing dishes, laundry, uncleaned bathrooms, etc.**
- ✓ **The occasional presence of household pests in the home is quickly dealt with.**

Level Three



The home shows extreme disorganization and indicates hoarding behavior. A household at Level 3 should consider hiring outside help to get clutter under control.

- ✓ **Piles of objects obstruct essential living areas.**
- ✓ **Several appliances are broken and unusable.**
- ✓ **Electrical and/or plumbing issues are present.**
- ✓ **Mild insect infestations are observed, potentially involving lice, cockroaches, ants, or bedbugs.**
- ✓ **Unpleasant odors pervade the home, accompanied by scattered dirty laundry.**
- ✓ **Spills and dirt accumulate for days, impacting food preparation and eating areas.**
- ✓ **Specific rooms are repurposed for storage, deviating from their intended function.**

Level Four



The home shows excessive clutter. Those living in Level 4 conditions require professional help to bring the home to a comfortable, hygienic space where they can thrive.

- ✓ **Excessive pets and pet waste may be present.**
- ✓ **Clutter is blocking access to stairs, rooms, and exits.**
- ✓ **A medium level of insect infestation is present.**
- ✓ **Structural damage is present, such as water damage, broken doors, and plumbing issues.**
- ✓ **Expired and rotting food is present in the home and contributes to odors.**
- ✓ **Multiple rooms are cluttered to the extent that they cannot be used for their intended purposes.**
- ✓ **Bats, squirrels, and/or other rodents may be in the attic or basement.**
- ✓ **Sewage is backed up.**

Level Five



The home is hazardous and requires professionals with safety equipment and training to clean.

- ✓ **Extreme indoor clutter makes important living spaces unusable.**
- ✓ **There is no ventilation in the home.**
- ✓ **Structural damage is irreparable.**
- ✓ **The water and/or electrical service has been disconnected.**
- ✓ **Occupants of the home are in danger due to pet behaviors, numbers, and/or health conditions.**
- ✓ **Household appliances are unusable due to disrepair or being blocked by clutter.**
- ✓ **Mold and/or mildew is pervasive throughout the home.**
- ✓ **Pets living in the home are at risk due to living conditions.**

Health & Wellness Impacts



Fire Hazards

Blocked exits, flammable clutter, risk of structural collapse, limited access for firefighters



Structural Issues

Mold, bowing floors, electrical, plumbing



Health

Spoiled food, bacterial growth, inability to bathe, allergy and asthma concerns



Pets

Animal waste, unclean water or food, too many pets



Mental

Lack of sleep, high level of stress, overwhelmed, depressed, no socialization



HOA, Apartments, Rentals

Increased likelihood of eviction

Empathetic Communication Strategies

Begin with empathy and understanding



- **Maintain a caring and positive approach, with no judgment.** Emphasize that you recognize the person's feelings and value them. This sets a foundation of trust.
- **Understand if you are not immediately invited inside since the hoarder may feel anxious about visitors.** Recognize and respect their space and comfort level. They may be sensitive about having others see their living environment.

Listen and gather perspectives



- **Actively listen as they share their perspective.** Let them talk about why they keep items and how they feel about their belongings. Truly hearing them helps build rapport.
- **Identify their needs, wants, and goals.** Ask thoughtful questions to understand what they hope to achieve. This can include improved safety, the ability to move around, reduced stress, or spending time with loved ones.

Show respect and sensitivity



- **Use respectful language and avoid referring to items as “junk.”** Words matter. Dismissing their items can make them feel disrespected or misunderstood.
- **Communicate a sensitivity to the items they collect and/or personal treasures.** Acknowledge that every item has meaning to them. Show that you value their connection to their belongings.

Gently address the impact of hoarding



- **Share small examples of how hoarding interferes with their daily life.** When the time is right, offer gentle observations on how clutter might be limiting their freedom or causing health/safety risks.
- **Consider a “harm reduction strategy” where safety and well-being are the focus and achieved without completely clearing out everything.** Instead of aiming for a total cleanout, aim for incremental improvements that preserve dignity and safety.

Collaboratively plan next steps



- **Work together to create a cleaning/organizing plan with small goals and steps.** Encourage a step-by-step approach. Start with a single room or category of items to make the process manageable.
- **You should not attempt a forced cleanup.** Forcing a large-scale cleanout can damage trust and lead to pushback. Collaboration and consent are key.

Reinforce ongoing support



- **Remind them you are there and that you care.** Keep lines of communication open and stress that you remain available to help, even if progress is slow.



How Bio-One Can Help

At Bio-One of Colorado, we understand that facing a hoarding situation can feel overwhelming and isolating. You don't have to go through it alone. Our compassionate team is specially trained to handle these challenging situations with care, respect, and discretion. No matter the time of day, we're here to help—ready to answer your call 24/7 and provide the support you need to restore safety and peace of mind.

Establishing trust is key

- An experienced team member will introduce themselves, tour the property, and learn about your unique needs, expectations, and goals.
- A free estimate will be created and tailored to you.

We are mindful of personal property and valuables

- Our technicians make it a priority to try to find and save items of value such as wallets, keys, coin collections, legal documents, photo albums, baseball cards, or more.

Your satisfaction is important

- We want to make sure you are satisfied and happy with our work. If for some reason something else needs to be done, we are here for you.



"We had an amazing experience with Bio-One. They cleaned out my mom's house which was an extreme hoarder situation. They did it with compassion and care -- no judgements! They put aside those things that we had asked for and disposed of the rest. It was done in a very efficient and professional manner. Jess and Phil were great to work with. I cannot recommend them enough."

- Lucia Mazier, Google Review



"Bio-One was a great company to work with. Matt and Jessica were awesome! My father's house was a hoarding and cat nightmare. They were very caring about our situation and did an excellent job of cleaning the house and disinfecting it!"

-L. Falk, Google Review



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