



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TEXTILES AND CLOTHING:

Priority: Dry archaeological textiles and textiles with bleeding dyes as quickly as possible, all other textiles within 48 hours to prevent mold growth.

Handling Move textiles only after a place has been prepared to receive them. Handle wet textile
Precautions: objects only when necessary and as little as possible because textile materials are weaker when wet and can be easily damaged or torn. Be particularly careful with wet archaeological textiles, which can be extremely weakened by contact with water. It is important to support wet textile objects thoroughly when moving them, either on a solid support or in a sling made from a length of fabric, because the added weight of the water increases the possibility of damage. Wet hanging costumes should be carried on a sling and not re-hung. Be sure that all identifying information, such as accession number tags, is retained with the objects, and label any parts that become detached. If it is possible to do so without excessive handling, remove all wet packing materials such as cardboard and tissue from contact with the textiles. Do not unfold or spread out wet textiles at this time, and do not stack wet textiles on top of each other.

Textile objects often have associated non-textile materials such as metal and leather. See the salvage instruction sheets for these materials, keeping in mind that the textile component will probably be the most vulnerable.

Preparation A large area is needed to dry wet textiles, as they cannot be placed on top of each other.
for Drying: Floor space can be used; if possible, clean floors before using the space. Table and floor surfaces should be covered with clean polyethylene sheeting, and then with clean blotters or other absorbent material. Fans can be used to increase air circulation and speed drying; place them so that air flow goes across the surface of the textiles for optimal drying.

Supplies Needed

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| polyethylene sheeting | blotters | cheesecloth |
| terry cloth toweling | sponges | muslin or boards for carrying |

Drying Quick drying is essential for best recovery of wet textile objects. Excess water can be
Procedures: removed from very wet textiles in good condition by gentle blotting with sponges. Absorbent materials such as blotters or terry cloth toweling should then be placed on top of the objects, removed when saturated, and replaced with dry ones. When the textiles have dried to an appreciable level, they can be gently handled to open out folds and expose new areas to the air. Costumes can be padded out slightly with acid-free tissue, polyester batting, or nylon tulle to speed drying and prevent creasing.

Textiles with bleeding dyes should be dried first and as quickly as possible; use absorbent materials to remove as much water as possible. Concentrate drying activity on the areas that are bleeding so that they will dry before the surrounding areas; hair driers on low heat can be used. Cover the textile with cheesecloth and be sure the cheesecloth is in close contact with the textile; leave the cheesecloth undisturbed until the textile is completely dry.