

Standard for the Preservation and Examination of Liquid Soaked Documents



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

This standard establishes minimum required procedures for preserving, examining, and reporting on documents exposed to water, blood, oils, or other liquids.

This standard does not address examining the documents to identify the liquid contamination. It also may not cover all aspects of unusual, uncommon, or specialized examinations.

The preservation and examination of charred documents is covered in ANSI/ASB 127, 1st Ed., 2022.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

It is not uncommon for documents from a scene to be exposed to liquids. These documents can be fragile and susceptible to other damage.

Adherence to this standard:

- Promotes consistency and reliability between practitioners and forensic science service providers
- Promotes practices that minimize damage to a document
- Promotes preservation of other evidence on a document
- Prioritizes non-destructive procedures
- Preserves evidence integrity during and after the examination process.



HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

The procedures in this standard are to be used by forensic document examiners (FDEs) who have knowledge of the materials used in document production, how those substrates react to humidity and liquids, and the processes used to preserve and restore documents, as well as the ability to analyze, compare, and evaluate case-related items.

This standard requires an initial assessment to determine the appropriate examinations, their sequence, and potential limiting factors based on the document submitted and its condition. The results of applicable examinations and accompanying notes, including relevant observations, should have sufficient detail to allow for another FDE's independent review and assessment of the results.

This standard provides guidance for selecting a method for multiple-page documents, single-page documents, dried documents previously exposed to moisture, and frozen documents. This standard provides procedures for both non-destructive and destructive examinations. Any limitations interfering with performing these procedures (e.g., the document condition) must be recorded.

Requirements for reporting are also included in this standard and require addressing the purpose of any examinations, the examinations conducted, the methods used, the results, limitations and sources of uncertainty, as applicable.