

# Hoarding – It’s Worse Than You Think

(Excerpt from Condo Media article with Ellen Shapiro, Esq.)

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Did you know that in 2014, hoarding was recognized as a psychiatric disorder that an estimated two to five percent of the population suffers from? That’s nearly 12 million people. Having dealt with multiple incidents of hoarding at the communities we represent, we were surprised to learn of the incredible prevalence of this issue. Hoarding can present a bevy of problems for boards, managers, and neighbors. Oftentimes, hoarding begets safety and sanitary woes; fire hazards, vermin, noxious odors, and other unpleasant or unlawful conditions. These issues, the products of the underlying disorder, must be addressed, but again, the lesson from this year’s seminar was one of perspective.

Associations are not in a position to treat psychiatric disorders, and hoarders will likely continue to hoard, even if a board cracks down on the problems that the behavior has created for the community. It is important to take this into consideration in terms of formulating a comprehensive strategy for resolution, and to spend time defining what a success should look like in different terms.

Court orders are most certainly necessary, at times, to correct imminent threats of damage or injury, but even these are unlikely to curb the conduct of the offender (remember, a court order is not likely to “cure” one of a psychiatric condition). Associations would do well to incorporate families or municipal or charitable service and support agencies when available to supplement their approach to hoarding cases. Boards may also want to consider adopting or enhancing clear access and clean-up provisions to leverage the power of their governing documents in order to monitor and prevent worsening conditions.