

# ESTATE PROPERTY CLEANOUT GUIDE

## 5 Operational Steps for Families Before Listing or Settlement on the South Shore

Presented by Jon Ladas, Owner & Estate Cleanout Specialist at Clean Slate

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Clearing out a loved one's home after a loss is one of the most emotionally challenging and physically exhausting parts of the estate process. As an executor or family member, rushing into a cleanout often leads to lost family heirlooms, unnecessary stress, and delays in listing the property. To help families navigate the logistics, we have outlined five key operational steps to manage the process efficiently:

### 1. Secure Vital Records First

Before moving a single piece of furniture, perform a dedicated, methodical sweep of all desks, drawers, and filing cabinets. Locate and hand over all legal, financial, and personal papers directly to your estate attorney. Search for:

- Original deeds, wills, and trust agreements
  - Life insurance policies and stock certificates
  - Past tax returns, bank statements, and utility bills
  - Military discharge papers (DD-214) and birth certificates
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### 2. Separate Sentimental Items (The 'Tag System')

To prevent misunderstandings among heirs, have all family members walk through the property together (or share detailed video tours). Use colored sticky notes or tags to identify items of personal or sentimental value.

**Our Best Practice:** Move all tagged sentimental items to a designated 'Safe Zone' (such as a locked bedroom, closet, or your personal vehicle) before any professional cleanout crew begins loading.

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### 3. Organize Local South Shore Donations

Whenever possible, prioritize giving a second life to quality furniture and household goods. On the South Shore, several local charities accept donations of gently used furniture:

- The Habitat for Humanity ReStore (Hanover, MA): Great for leftover building materials, furniture, and appliances
  - Big Brother Big Sister is a great option that many times will come walk through the property with you and take items that meet their condition standards
  - Local South Shore Veterans Programs: Many groups offer donation pick-ups for clothing and housewares
  - Local Charity & Thrift Networks (Quincy, Weymouth, Braintree): Supporting local community shelters and food pantries
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### 4. Manage Hazardous Materials & MassDEP Rules

Under Massachusetts environmental guidelines, certain household items cannot be thrown in a standard dumpster or trash trailer. These must be set aside for proper recycling or municipal collection.

Common household hazardous materials include:

- Oil-based paints, stains, varnishes, and paint thinners
  - Car batteries, motor oil, antifreeze, and automotive fluids
  - Propane tanks, gasoline cans, and fuel containers
  - Lawn chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers
  - Fluorescent bulbs, mercury thermostats, and electronic waste
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### 5. Understand the Physical 'Walkthrough' Standard

Most real estate contracts and estate settlements require the property to be delivered in “broom-clean” condition. This means all personal property, furniture, and debris must be removed from every area of the home before the final walkthrough day—including often-overlooked spaces.

- Basement and crawl spaces (old furniture, storage boxes, mechanical equipment)
  - Attic and upper floors (holiday decorations, stored clothing, insulation debris)
  - Garage and outdoor sheds (lawn equipment, paint cans, tools, automotive supplies)
  - Kitchen and bathrooms (all cabinets must be emptied and wiped down)
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*This guide is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Please consult with your estate attorney regarding specific legal requirements.*

## **Jon Ladas, Owner & Specialist**

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