



## Restoring Your Home after a Wildfire



Your home may have been badly damaged by flames, heat, smoke and water. The things that the fire did not burn up are now ruined by smoke and soggy with water used to put out the flames. Anything that needs to be saved or reused will need to be carefully cleaned.

### Here are the steps to follow after a fire in your home:

- Check with the fire department to make sure that your home is safe to enter. Be very careful when you go inside. Floors and walls may not be as safe as they look.
- Make sure that you have a safe place to live temporarily. Contact your local disaster relief service such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. This will help you find a place to stay and to find food, clothing and medicine.
- If you have pets, leave them with a family member, friend or veterinarian if you are returning or cleaning your damaged home. Keep the pets out of the house until the cleanup is complete to keep them safe.
- Contact your insurance company right away. Ask your insurance company what to do first. Some companies may ask you to make a list of everything that was damaged by the fire and how much you paid for them. If you are not insured, try contacting community groups for aid and assistance.
- Get in touch with your landlord or mortgage lender as soon as possible and tell them about the fire and the damages to the property.
- Try to find valuable documents and records. Replace documents that were destroyed or lost in the fire such as:
  1. Driver's license, auto registration
  2. Bankbooks (checking, savings, etc.), credit cards
  3. Insurance policies, warranties, passports
  4. Birth, death and marriage certificates, titles to deeds
  5. Stocks and bonds, prepaid burial contract, wills
  6. Social Security or Medicare cards, medical records and others.
- Contact your credit card company to report credit cards that were lost in the fire and request replacements.

- Save all of your receipts for any money you spend. The receipts may be needed later by insurance company and may be needed to prove any losses claimed on I your tax return.
- Check with an accountant or the IRS about special benefits for people recovering from fire loss.
- If you leave your home, call the local police department to let the police know that the site will be vacant.

#### **Tips on How to Handle the Damage:**

- Discard items impacted by smoke, heat, ash and chemicals. Food, medicines, cleaners, cosmetics and other toiletries can be damaged by heat, smoke and lingering chemical residues. Before disposing items, make sure that you inventory those items as part of your fire insurance claim.
- Follow local waste disposal requirements for disposal of hazardous materials.
- Check if your refrigerator or freezer is damaged. If your refrigerator or freezer is damaged by the fire and is not working, contact the insurance company about coverage as an eligible expense, and your local regional district about its safe disposal.
- If your refrigerator or freezer was not damaged by the fire and continues to work, take the following steps to clean refrigerators and freezers:
  1. Remove everything from the refrigerator or freezer. Be safe. If in doubt, throw it out!
  2. Wash out the appliance with warm, soapy water. Disinfect the refrigerator or freezer with a strong bleach solution (1 tsp household bleach per 4 cups water).
  3. To remove odors, wipe out the appliance with a mixture of water and baking soda, or keep a box of baking soda in the appliance. Secure doors in an open position to provide air flow and keep children away.
  4. Wait until the refrigerator has returned to 4C or freezer has returned to -18C before restocking with food.
- There may be smoke damage and soot in your home after the fire. With the use of Personal Protective Equipment, such as masks, rubber gloves, rubber boots, long sleeved shirts and pants, you can do the cleaning on your own, if you don't hire a fire restoration company.
- There are companies that are experts in cleaning and/or restoring your personal items. Whether you or your insurer buys this type of service, be clear on who will pay for it. Ask your insurance company for names of companies that can be trusted.
- These companies may provide services to: estimate damage, repair damage, estimate the cost to repair or renew items of personal property, and store repaired items until needed.
- For more information on what to do during the recovery period, please see: [https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa\\_46.pdf](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_46.pdf)