



It is rare to find someone who thinks, what if my home caught fire, what would I do? Home fires are major events that require immediate attention in some areas and follow up in others which can be difficult to accomplish while dealing with the shock. We have created this resource flyer to help you through the coming days and to provide some assistance in your effort to get back to normal.

After the Fire...

My home caught fire...What now?

If you are insured:

Contact your insurance company or agent as soon as possible. If you are renting, you must also contact the property owner or Management Company. Your insurance adjuster may be able to assist you in making immediate repairs or help in securing your home. If you are unable to contact your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, you may contact a general contractor or a fire damage restoration firm (usually listed as Contractors – General or Fire & Water Damage Restoration).

If you are not insured:

If you are not insured and need assistance, the American Red Cross is available to assist families who have been displaced from their homes through any type of disaster. They are available around the clock, every day of the year, with food, clothing, and housing.

If your property is not insured or your insurance will not cover all of your losses, contact an attorney or the Internal Revenue Service for directions. You may be eligible for casualty loss; check Publication 547, Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Thefts, available from your local Internal Revenue Service Office.

If you must stay elsewhere:

If your home is unlivable, and if you cannot find a place to stay, such as with family or friends, consult with your insurance company to see if you are covered for additional living expenses. The Red Cross may be able to provide temporary shelter until you can arrange to rent a place to stay.

If you must leave your home, try to locate the following items to take with you: important legal documents, identification, vital medicines, eye glasses, hearing aids, valuables, credit cards, checkbooks, insurance policies, money, jewelry, photos, etc. (Note: Let safes cool down before opening.)

The Fire Department will notify the City Building Department if your home has sustained damage as a result of fire. The Building Official will conduct an inspection of your home to assess the extent of the fire damage and to determine what permits are required to repair the home. Before attempting any repairs, please contact the Building Department at 303.412.3526.

Often the Fire Department must have the utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution and also to prevent further damage to the structure and its contents. The utility companies cannot restore your utilities until the repairs are approved, and a clearance has been issued by the Building Official.

Change of Address:

If you move, notify the US Postal Service, banks, utility companies, credit card companies, magazines/newspapers, etc., of your new address. Also contact Social Security Administration and the Department of Economic Security if you are receiving benefits.

Pets:

Smoke can damage the lungs of a dog or cat in minutes and sparks can cause painful burns that may stay hidden under your pet's fur. As soon as possible, take your pet to a veterinarian.

Counseling Support:

After a fire, you may experience: anxious feelings, depression, difficulty concentrating, sadness, anger, fatigue, irrational fears and nightmares. These are common responses to a traumatic event. If you or your family members need support, call the American Red Cross or seek a counselor. Some employers and/or health insurance carriers provide coverage for counseling services.

What about Odors?

Sometimes there is a residual smoke odor from a small fire that is annoying and lingering. Short of a good cleaning of everything in the house, you can place small saucers of household vanilla, wine, vinegar, or activated charcoal around your home to help absorb these odors. Remember that the smoke odor is also inside the heating and cooling ducts and you get a fresh blast every time the air system activates.

If insured, consult your insurance company for assistance. If the odor does not go away in about a week, you may want to contact a cleaning service specializing in restoration of fire damaged property. They have the equipment to scrub out the duct work and deodorize everything in the house.

Other Tips:

- Vacuum all surfaces.
- Change and clean air conditioner/heater filters.
- Seal off the room in which you are working with plastic wrap to keep soot from moving from one room to another. Try to keep windows closed.
- To remove soot and smoke from painted walls, mix together 4 to 6 tablespoons of tri-sodium phosphate (can be purchased at paint stores) and 1 gallon of water. Use rubber gloves and goggles when working with this solution.

Warning: Keep mixture away from children and pets!

Wash a small area at a time working from the floor up, saving the ceilings for last. Rinse thoroughly; do not repaint until completely dry. It is advised to use a smoke sealer (available at paint stores) before painting. If your walls are wallpapered, usually the wallpaper cannot be restored.

- Furniture – Do not use chemicals on furniture. A very inexpensive product called FLAX SOAP (readily available in hardware stores) is a most efficient product to use on wood, including kitchen cabinets.
- Do not dry furniture in the sun as the wood will warp and twist out of shape.
- Floors – Use FLAX SOAP on wood and linoleum floors. It will take 4 or 5 applications. Then strip and re-wax.
- Carpeting – Steam clean, shampoo, and repeat steam cleaning.
- Mattresses – Reconditioning an inner-spring mattress at home is very difficult if not impossible. Your mattress may be renovated by a company that builds or repairs mattresses. If you must use your mattress temporarily, put it out into the sun to dry, then cover it with plastic sheeting.

- It is almost impossible to get smoke odor out of pillows. Feathers and foam retain odors.
- Locks and hinges – Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart, wiped with kerosene and oiled. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening or keyhole and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

Warning – Do not use gasoline for cleaning!

- Mildew – To remove mildew, wash stain with soap and water. Rinse well and dry. If stain remains, use lemon juice and salt, or a solution of household bleach and warm water.
- Clothes – To remove smoke odor or soot from clothes that can be bleached, add ½ cup of ammonia to 2 gallons of water; then rinse in vinegar (use rubber gloves). Should you have any questions about the cleaning or preparation of clothing, it is wise to contact a cleaning service. Take wool, silk, or rayon garments to dry cleaner as soon as possible.

Warning – Do not mix ammonia with bleach!

- Electrical appliances – Do not run wet appliances until you have had a professional service person check them.
- Cooking utensils – Your pots, pans, flatware, etc. should be washed with soapy water, rinsed then polished with a fine powdered cleaner. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated in vinegar.

Cash or Negotiables?

If burned, handle with extreme care and as little as possible. Attempt to encase each crisp sheet in a plastic wrap in order to salvage as much as possible. Take everything to your local bank for advice regarding replacement.

What about Perishables?

Any food, beverages and/or medicines exposed to heat or smoke should not be consumed. Medicines, especially, can change strength by exposure to heat. Please check with your doctor first before taking these medicines. If food was in tightly closed or sealed containers, or in airtight refrigerators or freezers, they may be salvageable. It is cheaper to replace the material than to jeopardize your health by taking a chance. When in doubt, throw it out!

Vehicle Fires:

If insured, contact your insurance agent who can explain coverage and will assist with your claim. If your vehicle is damaged in a structure fire, contact both your home and auto insurance agents.

If you are uninsured, you will need to determine if the vehicle is repairable. If vehicle is a total loss (beyond repair), it may have some value to a salvage yard. A list of vehicle salvage companies can be found in a phone directory under Automobile Salvage.

Occasionally, fire crews will have to force entry into the vehicle to check for fire extension and extinguish the fire. To ensure that the fire is completely extinguished, it may be necessary for fire crews to:

1. Cut and/or disconnect battery cables to prevent electrical shorting of wires where insulation of wiring has been damaged.
2. Complete removal of padding from seats, especially where cotton padding is used.
3. Forced entry into the passenger compartment, engine compartment, and trunk of a vehicle to extinguish, check for extension, and gain access to battery cables.

Checklist for After the Fire....

Fire

Incident #: _____ Contact Name: _____

Date of

Incident: _____ Contact Number: _____

Insurance

Company: _____

Insurance

Agent: _____ Phone: _____

Landlord

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other Contacts Made:

Name _____ Phone: _____

Organization: _____

Name _____ Phone: _____

Organization: _____

Name _____ Phone: _____

Organization: _____

Name _____ Phone: _____

Organization: _____

Name _____ Phone: _____

Organization: _____

Name _____ Phone: _____

Organization: _____

Checklist (continued)

1. Contact Red Cross for temporary housing, food, clothing, medicines, etc. or arrange to stay with friends/family.
2. If you are insured, contact your insurance company for detailed instructions on protecting your property, conducting inventory and contacting fire damage restoration companies.
3. Check with the fire department to make sure your home is safe to enter. Be watchful of structural damage.
4. The Fire Department should see that all utilities are either safe to use or disconnected before they leave. Do not attempt to reconnect them yourself.
5. Conduct an inventory of damaged property and items prior to throwing them away.
6. Try to locate important documents and records such as a driver's license, social security cards, bank records, insurance policy, etc.
7. If you leave your home, contact the Federal Heights Police to notify them that your home will be vacant at 303.428.8833.
8. Save all receipts related to the fire loss. They may be needed later by the insurance company or the IRS for losses claimed.
9. Notify your mortgage company of the fire.
10. Check with an accountant or the IRS about benefits for those recovering from fire loss.
11. Notify others of your temporary situation including family, friends, schools, employers, post office, and utility companies.

Useful Phone Numbers:

American Red Cross	303-722-7474
Adams County Animal Shelter	303-288-3294
Adams County Dept. Human Services	303-227-2700
Fire Department – Emergency	9-1-1
Fire Department – Administration	303-412-3561
Internal Revenue Service	1-800-829-1040
Motor Vehicle Division	720-523-6010
Federal Heights Animal Control	303-428-8833
Police Department – Emergency	9-1-1
Police Department – Information	303-428-8833
Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213
State Department of Revenue	303-866-4622

Utilities:

Federal Heights Public Works	303-428-3526
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City of Federal Heights Fire Department
2400 W. 90th Ave.
Federal Heights, Colorado 80260
www.fedheights.org