



What to Do After a Fire

Fires are very traumatic events. Most people have little experience dealing with the aftermath of a significant fire. The following information offers some assistance regarding what to do after a fire:

Personal Protective Equipment - (PPE)

Personal protective equipment during fire cleanup operations must include several protective aspects. First, PPE should be used that protects the head, face, and eyes to prevent inhalation or absorption of harmful substances. This may include hard hats, face shields, and goggles.

Respiratory protection such as N95 mask are recommended.

Additional "head to toe" protection is necessary to minimize skin contact, improve worker visibility, maintain comfort and mobility, and decrease the risk of electrical or chemical burns. Coveralls, gloves, and study shoes are recommended.

Lost Power and Utilities

Do not attempt to turn on the gas yourself. At the onset of the fire, firefighters shut off gas and electricity. Utilities will remain off until the utility company determines it is safe to restore service. Do not run wet appliances until a professional has checked them. Damage, improper grounding, or short-circuiting may cause property damage or safety hazards.

Food and Water Safety

Keep cold foods cold. Closed freezers usually keep food frozen for at least 1 day, up to 3 days. A refrigerator is less able to keep foods cool.

Discard food if it may have been held above 41°F for more than 4 hours.

Make sure water is safe to drink. Boil your water unless your water company announces that water is safe to drink.

Information regarding private wells is available at www.azdeq.gov/environ/water/dw/download/privatewells.pdf.

During fire situations, water companies may chlorinate water to ensure safety. Water may also be shut off to your home. Please contact your water company if you need water access for livestock or if you have questions.

Water Damage

Check for water beneath vinyl flooring. It can cause odors, warp the supporting wood, and eventually cause the floor to lift. Call a flooring company for suggestions to remove or loosen the remaining adhesive without damaging the covering. After you remove the covering, let wood dry thoroughly before replacing.

Allow rugs and carpets to dry thoroughly. Lay them flat and expose to warm, dry, circulating air.

Fans help speed drying. Even though the surface may appear dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can cause a rug or carpet to rot. Clean dried throw rugs by beating, sweeping, or vacuuming, and then shampooing. For more information, call a carpet dealer or installer.

Assess damaged wood furniture and fixtures since they may be salvageable.

- Clean off mud and dirt. Scrub with a soft brush and mild cleaning solutions
- Wipe dry with a soft cloth
- Dry wood thoroughly to prevent mold and decay; don't dry in sun to prevent warping and twisting

Fire and Ash Damage

Wood ash is a combination of nutrients and minerals left behind by burned wood. The ash from vegetation can be messy, but not harmful.

However, ash from a home or garage that has burned may be harmful, because of chemicals and consumer products in the home or garage. Wet the ash before removing it to avoid creating a potentially harmful dust.

Wash cooking utensils, such as pots, pans, and flatware with soapy water, rinse, and polish with a fine powder cleanser. Clean copper and brass with salt sprinkled on a vinegar-saturated cloth.

Smoke Damage

Wash smoke odor and soot from clothing. This formula is safe for bleach-safe clothing:

4-6 teaspoons laundry detergent

1 cup household chlorine bleach

1 gallon water

Mix well; add clothes; rinse with clear water; and dry well.

Septic System

Due to the wide range of septic system types it is recommended that routine maintenance be performed as appropriate for your specific system; these guidelines are listed in the septic system Owner Operation and Maintenance Manual (each homeowner should have a copy).

- Certain systems could be adversely affected by lack of use during prolonged absence
- Additional concerns might be fire retardant, water, ash, and weight of fallen debris

For information call Coconino County Community Development at 928-679-8850.

NEVER mix chlorine bleach with anything other than water or laundry detergent. Chlorine bleach mixed with ammonia or other chemicals can result in toxic fumes with serious, potentially fatal results.

Propane and Household Chemicals

Ensure that your propane tanks are secure and not leaking. Check to make sure the lines have not been damaged by fire. If the fire may have damaged the tank or lines, don't use the propane and call your propane service provider.

Properly dispose of household chemicals if the original containers or labels are damaged. Do not transfer chemicals to new containers.

Call your insurance carrier right away

- Check to determine whether this type of service is covered by your policy and if the insurer will either accept billing from the restoration company or will reimburse you.
- Don't settle claims or sign releases too quickly.
- Confirm they will take care of security matters, i.e., boarding up your property, or call your landlord, who can contact insurance carriers.
- Take your time and make sure your agent knows of all your losses, since it may be difficult to recall everything at once.
- Much more cleaning might be necessary due to smoky odors and fine smoke particles than first expected.
- When severe damages occur to buildings, it may be worthwhile to have professionals provide estimates associated with cleaning up costs.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a bacterial infection that can cause serious illness, resulting in muscle stiffness and tightening of the neck and shoulder muscles, commonly known as 'lockjaw.' Around 10 percent of tetanus cases are fatal. In most settings, a disaster does not increase the risk for tetanus. However, the risk of tetanus among disaster survivors and emergency responders can best be minimized by following standard immunization recommendations and providing proper wound care. After receipt of Tdap, a booster shot of tetanus and diphtheria (Td) is recommended for adults every 10 years.

If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, a healthcare professional should determine if a tetanus booster is necessary. If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to Tetanus, please speak to your healthcare provider or call the CCHHS Clinic at 928-679-7222.

Consider purchasing flood insurance

There may be a greater risk of flooding due to recent wildfires that have burned across the region. Flood risk remains significantly higher until vegetation is restored.

A separate flood insurance policy through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) covers damage to your home and belongings caused by flooding.

If your insurance agent is not aware of the procedures for selling flood insurance policies, then please call 1-800-720-1093 for a referral.

You can also find a local insurance agent at www.floodsmart.gov. When purchasing a flood insurance policy, there is usually a 30-day waiting period for coverage to become effective.

Documents and Records

Here is a Checklist of documents you may need to replace if they are destroyed or missing.

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|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Birth certificates | Wills |
| School records | Medical Records |
| Passports | Military identification |
| Title to deeds | Medical insurance cards |
| Driver's licenses | Insurance policies |
| Military discharge papers | Bank books |
| Social Security cards | Income tax records |
| Stocks and bonds | Payment books |
| Citizenship records | Marriage/divorce papers |
| Automobile titles | Animal registration papers |
| Credit cards | Prepaid burial contracts |
| Warranties | Vaccination records |
| Checkbooks/statements | |

Social services and welfare clients: notify your caseworkers if identification cards for check cashing, medical care or food stamps have been destroyed.

Arizona Birth/death records replacement assistance: visit www.azdhs.gov/vitalrctd/ or contact:

Coconino County Health and Human Services

Walk-ins, online, or by phone services available. Call or check website for information.

2625 N. King Street

Flagstaff, AZ 86004

928-679-7272

<http://www.coconino.az.gov/253/Birth-Certificates>

Arizona Department of Health Services Office of Vital Records

1818 West Adams Street

Phoenix, AZ 85007

602-364-1300

<https://azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php>

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