

What To Do After a Fire



A fire can be overwhelming, but taking the right steps immediately afterward can protect your property, support your insurance claim, and speed up the recovery process.

1. Ensure Everyone Is Safe

- Do not re-enter the building until the fire department or authorities declare it safe.
- Call 911 if emergency assistance is still needed.
- Seek medical attention for anyone who may have been injured or exposed to smoke.

2. Contact Your Insurance Company

- Report the loss as soon as possible.
- Write down your claim number and adjuster's contact information.
- Ask about temporary housing, emergency expenses, and next steps.

3. Secure the Property

- Board up damaged windows and doors.
- Tarp damaged roofs to prevent additional weather damage.
- Prevent unauthorized entry whenever possible.

4. Document Everything

- Take photos and videos before moving anything.
- Create an inventory of damaged belongings.
- Keep receipts for emergency purchases and temporary repairs.

5. Avoid DIY Cleanup

- Smoke and soot continue damaging surfaces over time.
- Water left from firefighting can lead to mold within 24–48 hours.
- Electronics, HVAC systems, and specialty materials require professional cleaning.

6. Leave Utilities Off

- Do not restore electricity, gas, or water until they have been inspected and approved.

7. Protect Important Items

- If safe, remove medications, identification, financial records, passports, and irreplaceable valuables.
- Separate salvageable items from heavily damaged materials.

8. Contact a Professional Restoration Company

- Emergency board-up and roof tarping
- Water extraction and structural drying
- Smoke and soot cleanup
- Contents cleaning and deodorization
- Selective demolition
- Complete reconstruction

Additional Important Steps

- Notify your mortgage company or property manager if applicable.
- Do not discard damaged items until your insurance company authorizes it.
- Keep a written log of everyone you speak with, including dates and phone numbers.
- Watch for scams—work only with licensed, reputable restoration contractors.
- If your business is affected, notify employees, customers, and key vendors as appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I stay in my home?

Only if local authorities determine it is safe.

Should I throw damaged items away?

No. Your insurance company may need to inspect them first.

How quickly should cleanup begin?

As soon as the property is safe to enter. Prompt mitigation helps reduce permanent smoke damage and mold growth.

Can smoke odor be removed?

Yes. Professional deodorization techniques can eliminate odors that standard cleaning cannot.

Quick Recovery Checklist

- ✓ Ensure everyone is safe
- ✓ Contact your insurance company
- ✓ Secure the property
- ✓ Document all damage
- ✓ Save receipts and keep records
- ✓ Avoid DIY cleanup
- ✓ Contact a professional restoration company immediately

The sooner professional mitigation begins, the better the outcome for your property and the faster life can return to normal. For immediate assistance, call John Grace at (616) 438-5315.