

# THE FIRST 24 HOURS

## After the Fire



Recovery from a fire can be a physically and mentally demanding process. A fire is devastating and the hardest part is knowing where to begin.

Red Deer County Fire Services has gathered the following information which provides suggestions on some immediate actions that you may need to take and also future and ongoing processes. The information in this booklet is intended to provide assistance and to help you as you begin rebuilding.



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### Protecting Yourself, Your Family, and the Fire Site

Considerations for immediately after the fire:

- Temporary housing
- Food
- Medicine
- Clothing
- Other essentials

### Contact your Insurance Agent / Company

It will be necessary for you to contact your insurance agent / company as soon as possible



Cautions:

- Do not re-enter the structure
- Follow any instructions given by your insurance agent / company or County Fire Investigator
- Utility services (natural gas and power) may have to be disconnected to fight the fire in the structure
- Only have these services reconnected if safe to do so:
  - Gas reconnection
    - ATCO GAS 1.800.668.5508
  - Power reconnection
    - FortisAlberta 403.310.9473
    - EPCOR 403.310.4300
  - Telephone service
    - TELUS 403.310.8324

Structure Security:

- In some cases it may be necessary to board up openings in the structure caused by the fire. This is done to keep trespassers out and to protect the scene.
- If you have any questions regarding re-entering the structure contact your insurance company representative.



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Beginning immediately, save any receipts for any money you spend. You may need to show your insurance company what money you have spent related to your fire loss. Each insurance company will have their own procedure related to expenses. Please contact them for clarification.

If and when it is safe to do so, or you are allowed try to locate the following items:

1. Identification such as drivers licenses, birth certificates, social insurance cards
2. Household insurance information
3. Medication information
4. Eyeglasses, medications and other supportive devices
5. Valuable such as credit cards, bank records, cash, jewelry

### Temporary Relocation Notification List

Many people and agencies need to be notified if you and your family are relocated for any period of time:

- Your family and friends
- Your insurance company – ensure they know where you are staying and provide contact information, i.e. phone number, cell phone number
- Your child / children's school
- Your bank or mortgage holding company
- Your employer
- The post office in case of absence from your residence after the fire
- Any delivery services that you may utilize
- The Fire Department and RCMP Administration

### IF YOU ARE INSURED

- Utility companies
- Cable or Satellite provider
- Telephone provider
- Ensure you notify your insurance agency/company as soon as possible
- Ask your insurance agent/company what you should do about immediate needs such as:
  - Dwelling requirements,
  - Covering doors and windows affected by the fire
  - Water removal – if any resulted from fighting the fire
  - Immediate food and shelter provisions
- Ask your insurance agent/company what actions are required of you. Ask for clarification on any issues you are unsure about



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### IF YOU ARE NOT INSURED

- Do not throw anything away until instructed by your insurance company
- Itemize damaged belongings
- Discuss all plans with your insurance company concerning damaged items
- Contact
  - Friends or family immediately
- Contact agencies that can assist with short term needs such as
  - Family Community Services

### VALUING YOUR PROPERTY

- RCMP Victim Services
- Red Cross
- Salvation Army

Personal loss is difficult to value. Some key areas that you should target when assembling a list of items lost in a fire and their respective values:

- Costs when purchased; receipts are very helpful in this situation
- If receipts are not available approaching the store where items were purchased by help to determine a value for lost items
- How long have you owned an item; this can assist in valuing the present day replacement costs

### RESTORATION AND CLEANING SERVICES

- Fair Market Value; this is the cost you could have sold the item the day before the fire. The cost would reflect fair market cost minus wear and tear essentially the depreciation cost of the item.

Several companies specialize in fire restoration services. Inquire with your insurance agent or adjuster about securing a company as soon as possible.

Be clear on ensuring who will pay for this service. Each insurance policy may differ; ask before contacting any such restoration company. Your insurance company may contact a company on your behalf. Be sure to ask who contacts, and who pays.

Professional Fire Rescue Restoration Companies may be your best option for cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Consult with your insurance company for guidance of this process.

**Know your responsibilities before making decisions!**



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### REPLACEMENT OF VALUABLE DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

Below is a checklist of potential documents that may need to be replaced if destroyed by a fire, and who you will need to contact in order to start the replacement process:

	DOCUMENT	CONTACT	PHONE NUMBER/EMAIL
	Driver License	Alberta Registries Office	
	Bank Records	Your Banking Institution	
	Insurance Policies	Your Insurance Agency/Company	
	Passports	Government of Canada - Passports	1.800.567.6868
	Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates	Alberta Registries Office	
	Canada Pension Certificates/Cards	Alberta Registries Office	
	Credit Card Replacement	Banking or Lending Institution	
	Social Insurance Number	Local Service Canada Office (cards are no longer provided)	
	Titles and Deeds	Alberta Registries Office	
	Stocks and Bonds	Issuing Company or your Stock Broker	
	Wills	Lawyer	
	Medical Records	Physician or Alberta Health Services	
	Warranties	Issuing Company	
	Income Tax Records	Revenue Canada (or your Accountant)	
	Mortgage Records	Bank or Lending Institution	



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### SALVAGE TIPS AND HINTS

#### CLOTHING

Before you begin, test garments and follow manufacturer's instructions before using any cleaning product. Many cleaning mixtures described in this section contain a substance called Tri-Sodium Phosphate, also known under the generic name TSP. This substance is caustic and is commonly used as a cleaning agent. Caution should be followed when using this product and any other products.

Keep out of children's reach and avoid using around family pets. Wear rubber gloves for maximum protection especially if you have sensitive skin. PLEASE ALWAYS READ THE LABEL BEFORE USING.

Smoke odour and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. The following formula may work for clothing that can be bleached:

- 4 to 6 TBSP Tri-Sodium Phosphate
- 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

Mix well, add clothes, rinse with clear water and dry thoroughly.

An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash the fresh stains with soap and warm water, rinse, and then dry in the sun. If the stain has not disappeared use lemon juice and salt or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach on stain.

#### COOKING UTENSILS

Pots, pans, flatware, etc. should be washed with soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powered cleaner. Copper and brass can be polished with special polish called Brasso, or salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.

#### ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

PLEASE DO NOT USE electrical appliances that have been exposed to steam and water from firefighting crews. Have each appliance affected inspected and certified by an electrician or appliance repair company prior to using. Steam and water can remove lubricant from internal moving parts and can pose a shock hazard.

#### FOOD

Canned foods can be washed with detergent and water. Do the same for food in jars. Food containers that have been exposed to heat from the fire should be discarded. Cans that have been exposed to heat from a fire may bulge out or be discoloured. Inspect each can individually before cleaning.

Do NOT re-freeze food that has been thawed due to fire.



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To remove odour from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water, or use one cup of vinegar or household ammonia to one gallon of water. Baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal can be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odour.

### **RUGS AND CARPETS**

Carpets and rugs should be allowed to dry thoroughly, and then vacuumed to collect all loose debris. Cleaning should be accomplished by a company that specializes in carpet cleaning.

### **LEATHER AND BOOKS**

Wipe leather products with a damp cloth, and then dry with a dry cloth. Purses and shoes can be stuffed with newspaper to help retain the original shape of the item. Leather goods should be dried away from a heat source or the sun, allow them to dry naturally. For leather clothing, consult with a dry cleaning company to seek advice on care and restorative processes for these types of items.

When leather goods have been dried naturally, you can clean them with saddle soap.

Wet books need to have your immediate attention. The best method to save a wet book is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer. This special freezer will remove the moisture without damaging the pages. Finding a vacuum type freezer may be difficult, consult with your insurance adjuster about this process. Perhaps they can assist in locating this service for you. In the meantime, place wet books in a normal freezer until a vacuum freezer can be located.

### **LOCKS AND HINGES**

Locks and hinges affected by water from firefighting operations may begin to rust and ultimately seize and not be usable. Oiling and cleaning the hinges and locks will help prevent rusting. By doing this it may help reduce future costs associated with replacement.

### **WALLS, FLOORS, AND FURNITURE**

Soot can be removed from walls, floors, and furniture by using a mild soap or detergent solution. Additionally, the following solution has proven effective in soot removal:

- 4 to 6 TBSP Tri-Sodium Phosphate
- 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

Please wear rubber gloves when using any caustic cleaning solution, especially if you have sensitive skin. Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clean water and dry thoroughly after washing.

Work a small area first. This process will demonstrate the effectiveness of the cleaning solution. You may have to adjust the strength of the solution or change to a different product depending on the results of the area cleaned. Always rinse with clean water and wash ceilings last. Do not paint walls and ceilings until they are completely dry.



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### WOOD FURNITURE

- Avoid drying your wood furniture in the sun. this process can cause the wood to warp and twist
- Clear off any mud and dirt thus allowing for complete consistent drying to take place.
- Scrub wood furniture with a stiff brush and cleaning solution
- Remove drawers; let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you re-insert them
- Wood will decay and mold if not allowed to dry thoroughly. Assist in ensuring adequate ventilation is present, open windows and doors allowing for increased air flow. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner if necessary.
- If mold should form, a solution of borax dissolved in water should be used to wipe down the affected areas. If mold forms, consider discarding the furniture. If you do not wish to discard the affected piece, contact your local Health Inspector and seek advice on completely eliminating the mold.

### MONEY REPLACEMENT

- If paper money is damaged, a local banking institution may replace some damaged bills
- Avoid handling damaged paper money as much as possible

## FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

- The degree of damage may dictate if an institution will replace it or not.
- Ensure that both serial numbers are present on the bill

### COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT OPERATIONS TO EXTINGUISH THE FIRE AT YOUR RESIDENCE

#### Q. Why are windows broken or holes cut in the roof?

The natural progression of all fire is to travel up and outward. Completing tasks like cutting holes in the roof or breaking windows is to effect ventilation. By quickly and effectively removing the trapped smoke and hot fire gases from the structure allows firefighters to quickly advance to the fire to extinguish it thus severely limiting potential damage due to the fire.

#### Q. Why have holes been cut in the walls?

This is done to ensure that all areas around the fire's origin and path of travel are completely extinguished. All embers or potential hidden fires masked inside a wall are completely extinguished prior to fire department leaving scene. This process ensures that the fire will not re-kindle.

#### Q. Do I have to pay for the firefighting service?

NO. Firefighting services are funded through the property taxes you pay annually.

**Further information can be obtained by contacting Red Deer County Fire Services at 403.343.6667.**