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# *WHAT TO DO NOW*

## *AFTER THE FIRE*



**Law Enforcement, Fire & EMS Chaplaincy of Napa County** 

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# After the Fire

## . . . We Continue to Serve

### ***Fire Service Chaplaincy of Napa County & Napa Fire Department***

Insurance Company & Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

CAL Fire / CDF or NFD Incident Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Claim Number from Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor's Name & Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian & Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Chaplain: \_\_\_\_\_

After a fire, so many things require attention that the situation may appear overwhelming. There is the loss of property and possessions; there is the damage from heat, smoke, and water (which sometimes can exceed the direct loss by fire); and there is a disruption of lifestyles.

This material has been developed for residents who have suffered loss from fire. It contains information that will help limit further property loss and assist in replacing vital records, which may have been lost or damaged.

### **PROPERTY INSURANCE**

The first thing to do after the fire is to contact your insurance company or agent as soon as possible and **obtain an insurance claim number.**

This claim number is basically the account where all the recovery costs will be paid. Your insurer will issue this number.

Your insurance adjuster may be able to help in making immediate repairs or in helping to secure your home. If you are renting or leasing the property, you must also contact the owner. Inform them of the situation, and request that a representative respond to the scene. It is in their best interest as well as yours to minimize any further damage to your property or belongings.

If you cannot reach your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, a general contractor, a fire damage restoration firm, or a fire service firm can help. Check your Yellow Pages under "Fire and Water Damage Restoration."

Regarding working with different companies that "show up" uninvited to your home or call you, be very careful as there are individuals / companies that will take advantage of you and the

situation. Some will even tell you that they have been ordered by your insurance company to meet with you, etc. We would suggest that after making initial contact with your insurance company and you have obtained your claim number meet or talk only to those individuals who have your actual claim number or specific information that can be verified. Always verify with your insurance company which contractor or companies they want you to work with.

### **TAKE PICTURES OF YOUR HOME**

Take photos of everything including outside the home on all four sides, the roof and basement, every room inside the home from ceiling to floor on all four walls, damaged and undamaged.

Compile a brief photo log explaining what the photos are. The more pictures you can provide to your insurer the better. Remove as many valuables as possible if you must stay elsewhere.

### **CONTACT NAPA FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Contact the Napa Fire Prevention Office (707) 257-9590 for any questions you might have. Call them to request copies of the fire report.

If the Napa Fire Department is investigating the fire, an officer will accompany you through the house when you remove valuables. Be sure to inventory the property you remove. Further, you should check for important legal documents, which may have been damaged.

If your property is not insured, or if your insurance will not cover all of your losses, contact your attorney or the Internal Revenue Service for directions. You may be eligible for a tax deduction.

### **STAY IN CONTACT WITH YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY**

Communication is key. Once a claim number is issued confirm with your insurance agent that you have the authorization to pay for any services, such as boarding up of the structure, hiring a clean up company, or using temporary lodging. Usually this can be handled over the phone.

Remember to **SAVE** any and all receipts for items and services associated with the recovery process.

### **STAY INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS**

Be on site during the inventory, salvage / pack-out, clean up, demolition, and re-construction process.

### **IF YOU CANNOT LIVE IN THE HOUSE**

This may be your decision or one based on the Building Inspector's judgment that the residence is unsafe. If you do decide to leave:

1. Contact the Napa Police Department: They will keep an eye on the property during your absence (707) 257-9550.
2. Temporary Housing: Local relief services like the American Red Cross (707) 257-2900 and

Salvation Army (707-226-8150) should be able to help you with temporary housing.

3.If you are insured under a package homeowner's or tenant's policy, a section of your coverage may pay for the extra costs of temporary housing, such as a hotel.

4.Try to locate the following items to take with you:

- Identification
- Vital medicines, such as blood pressure regulating drugs, or insulin.
- Valuables, such as credit cards, checkbooks, insurance policies, savings account books, money, jewelry, etc. If you have a safe, do not attempt to open it. A safe involved in a fire may hold intense heat for several hours. If the door is opened before the safe has cooled, the contents may burst into flames.

5.If you have moved:

- Notify the Post Office of your new address
- Notify bank(s)
- Notify utility companies
- Notify credit card companies
- Check with your local school district
- Notify Social Security Administration

6.The local Building Department will be notified if there is structural damage to your home.

Before attempting any repairs, check with them for the need of special permits:

**Community Services Building 1600 First Street, Napa, CA 94559 (707) 257-9540**

## **UTILITIES**

Often, the Napa Fire Department will have utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution and to prevent further damage to the structure and contents.

The utility company will **NOT** make repairs on the customer's side of the meter such as house wiring or gas lines. A private contractor will have to make the repairs. Utility companies will not restore your utilities until the repairs are approved by the Building Department.

Do Not Attempt to Reconnect Utilities Yourself!

**Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (800) 743-5000**

## **DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS**

Documents are very important to your well-being and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire or other disaster. For this reason, the Napa Fire Department has provided a list of

documents that should be located if possible. Locating these documents will speed up the process of recovering from a disaster.

- Birth Certificates
- Divorce Decrees
- Medical Records
- Drivers Licenses
- Citizenship Papers
- Payment Books
- Insurance Policies
- Credit Cards
- Income Tax Records
- Military Discharge Papers
- Title or Deeds
- Warranties
- Passports
- Stocks and Bonds
- Prepaid Burial Contracts
- Social Security Cards
- Wills
- Death Certificates
- Bank Books
- Animal Licenses and Registrations
- Auto Registration and Title Papers
- Marriage Documents

**REPLACING YOUR VITAL DOCUMENTS** - Fortunately, you can replace most important personal records. Use the following link as a starting point:

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Family-Issues/Vital-Docs.shtml>

<b>Note</b>	It is wise to store all-important documents in an approved container that is specially designed for such purposes.
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Copies of marriage and divorce records can be obtained from the clerk of the Superior Court in the county of the marriage or divorce. Copies of birth and death certificates can be obtained from the county of the birth or death.

If the events took place in Napa County, contact the Napa County Assessor-Recorder located at Carithers Building; 1127 First Street, Room 128; Napa, CA 94559; (707) 253-4466; Office hours: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

## **MONEY REPLACEMENT**

If your US Savings Bonds have been mutilated or destroyed, write to:

**US Treasury  
Attention: Bond Consultant  
Public Department  
200 Third Street  
Parkersburg, West Virginia 26101**

Include name(s) and address(es) on bonds, along with approximate date or time period when purchased, and denominations and approximate number of each.

If your money (paper) is only half burned or less (if half or more of the bill is intact), check with any local commercial bank, take it to the Federal Reserve Bank, or mail the remainder of the money via First Class Registered mail to:

**Department of the Treasury  
Bureau of Engraving and Printing  
OCS, Room 344, BEPA PO Box 37048  
Washington, DC 20013**

Take damaged coins to your personal bank, the Federal Reserve Bank, or mail via First Class Registered Mail to:

**US Mint  
5th and Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19015**

## **Salvage Methods**

### **Cleaning Walls, Furniture, and Carpeting**

1. Vacuum all surfaces.
2. Change and clean air conditioner/heater filters.
3. Seal off the room you are working in with plastic wrap to keep soot from moving from one location to another. Try to keep windows closed.
4. Painted Walls -- To remove soot and smoke from walls, mix together: four to six tablespoons trisodium phosphate (tsp) purchased in hardware or paint stores and one gallon of water. Keep away from children and pets! The use of RUBBER GLOVES and GOGGLES is recommended. Wash small area at a time, working from the floor up. Do ceilings last. Rinse thoroughly. Do not repaint until completely dry. We suggest you use a smoke

sealer (purchased in paint stores) before painting.

5. Wallpapered Walls -- Usually, wallpaper cannot be restored. Check with your wallpaper dealer.
6. Furniture -- Do not use chemicals on furniture. An inexpensive product called FLAX SOAP (purchased in hardware and paint stores) is an 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.
7. Floors -- Use FLAX SOAP on wood and linoleum floors. It will take four to five applications. Then strip and re-wax. For carpeting -- steam clean, shampoo, and repeat steam cleaning.
8. Mattresses -- Reconditioning inner-spring mattresses at home is very difficult if not impossible. Your mattress can probably 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. Foam and feathers retain the odor -- replace pillows.
9. 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. Thoroughly clean and oil hinges.

There are many commercial cleaners on the market that will assist you in cleaning. "Grease Relief" by Texize, and others, may be used with success. As with all cleaning agents, test a small area first to see if the cleaning agent will damage the article. Always read the instructions and follow safety instructions when using cleaning agents.

### **Electrical Appliances**

Don't run wet appliances until you have had a serviceman check them. If the Fire Department turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the electric or gas company to restore these services: **Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (800) 743-5000**

### **DO NOT TRY TO DO IT YOURSELF.**

### **Cooking Utensils**

Wash your pots, pans, flatware, etc. with soapy water, rinse and then polish with a fine-powdered cleaner. Polish copper and brass with special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated in vinegar.

## **Clothing**

Smoke odor and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. The following formula will often work for clothing that can be bleached:

- 4 - 6 teaspoons trisodium phosphate (tsp)
  - 1 cup Lysol **or** any household chlorine bleach
  - 1 gallon warm water
- \* Mix well -- add clothes, rinse with clean water, then dry well.

To remove mildew, wash the fresh stain with soap and water. Then rinse and dry in the sun. If the stain is not gone, use lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

Test colored garments before using any cleaning treatment!

Take wool, silk, or rayon garments to a dry cleaner as soon as possible.

## **Leather and Books**

Wipe your leather goods with a damp cloth, then with a dry cloth. Stuff your purses and shoes with newspaper to retain their shape. Leave your suitcases open. Dry leather goods away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. You can use steel wool or a suede brush on suede. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Dry books by placing them on end with the pages separated. Then they should be piled and pressed to prevent the pages from crinkling. To help prevent mildew, alternate drying and pressing until the books are thoroughly dry. If your books are very damp, sprinkle cornstarch or talc between the pages, leave for several hours, then brush off. A fan turned on the books will help them dry.

## **Food -- "If in Doubt -- Throw it Out"**

Wash your canned goods in detergent and water. Do the same for food in jars. If the labels come off, be sure you mark the contents on the can or jar with a grease pencil. Do not use canned goods when cans have bulged, are dented, or rusted.

If your home freezer has stopped running, you can still save the frozen food:

- Keep the freezer closed. Your freezer has enough insulation to keep food frozen for at least



one day -- perhaps two or three days.

- Move your food to a neighbor's freezer or commercial freezer firm. Wrap the frozen food in newspapers and blankets, or use insulated boxes.
- If your food has thawed, observe the following procedures:
- Fruits can be re-frozen if they still taste and smell good.
- Do not re-freeze vegetables if they have thawed completely. Re-freeze only if there are ice crystals in the vegetables. If your vegetables have thawed and cannot be used soon, throw them out. If you have any doubts whether your vegetables are spoiling, throw them out -- don't wait for a bad odor.
- Meats may be re-frozen (if ice crystals remain) but cook very thoroughly before tasting. If odor is poor or if you question these foods, throw them out as bacteria multiply rapidly.

### **Refrigerators and Freezers**

To remove odor 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. Some baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal can be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odor.

When cleaning or discarding a refrigerator or freezer. **BE SURE THE DOOR IS REMOVED OR SECURED TO PREVENT THE DOOR FROM BEING CLOSED.**

### **Reference Directory**

American Red Cross (24-Hour Emergency Service): 1-800-660-4272

Napa Red Cross: (707) 257-2900

Salvation Army (707) 226-8150

Napa Animal Shelter: (707) 253-4381

Napa Animal Control: (707) 253-4517

Napa Bus Transit Service (VINE): (707) 251-2800 or (800) 696-6443

Solano Napa Commuter Information: (800) 535-6883

**Computer Hard Drive Restoration:** DriveSavers, Inc. 800-440-1904; 415-382-2000. 400 Bel Marin Keys Blvd., Novato, CA 94949. Please reference this number for special discount through Napa City Fire Dept. #DS31503. Check websites / Yellow pages for computer restoration and repair.

**City of Napa**

NFD Fire Administration: (707) 257-9593

NFD Fire Prevention: (707) 257-9590

Police Non-emergency assistance: (707) 257-9223

Water and Sewer Emergency: (707) 258-6000

Department of Motor Vehicles: (800) 777-0133

**Cal Fire / Napa County Fire**

(707) 967-1400 Business Hours

(707) 963-4112 24 hour non-emergency line

**Government Information**

Napa County Assessor-Recorder located at Carithers Building; 1127 First Street, Room 128; Napa, CA 94559; &707) 253-4466; Office hours: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

**Income Tax Information**

Federal (Recorded Help Line): 1-800-829-4477 State: 1-800-852-5711

**Utilities**

Garbage and Trash Disposal: (707) 255-5200

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (800) 743-5000

Phone Service: If damage occurred to your phone line, dial the universal statewide number 611 to restore service. You can call this number not only for repairs to your telephone service, but to also speak to the business office, place an order, discuss your bill, get help for issues regarding your high speed internet service, and / or help with your dish network.

**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Form completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Document prepared by  
**Law Enforcement, Fire & EMS Chaplaincy of Napa County 707.479.5812**

**Resources: Law Enforcement, Fire & EMS Chaplaincy of Napa County; Vacaville Fire Department’s website:**  
[http://www.ci.vacaville.ca.us/departments/fire/resources/residents/after\\_the\\_fire.php](http://www.ci.vacaville.ca.us/departments/fire/resources/residents/after_the_fire.php)