

## After a Fire - What to do Next?



### **IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FIRE**

The Red Cross will require identification for some services. Some acceptable forms of identification are driver's license, government documents, neighbor information, utility bills, etc.

#### **Have injuries treated by qualified professionals.**

- First, wash and disinfect any wounds to remove all dirt and debris. When wrapping wounds, always use a sterile dressing or bandage. (Very minor wounds may heal fine without a bandage.)

#### **Remain calm and pace yourself.**

- This is an incredibly stressful time, and you may be required to make difficult decisions. Listen carefully to what trusted people are telling you. Deal with urgent situations first. Use the resources you have been given to make informed decisions.

**Check with the Fire Department to ensure your residence is safe to enter.**

- Do not cut or walk past the tape that has been placed over doors or windows. This tape indicates that the structure is unsafe to enter. The proper authorities will be notified to inspect the structure and will advise you when it is safe to re-enter.

**Your family's physical and emotional care and recovery are just as important as rebuilding and healing physical wounds.**

- Try to return to as many of your personal and family routines as possible.
- Get rest and drink plenty of water.
- Reach out and accept help from others, recognize your own feelings. Stay connected with family and other support systems.
- Focus on the positive; do something you enjoy.
- Realize that recovery can take time.

**Do Not Forget Your Pets!**

- If you have pets, quickly secure, and comfort them. Scared animals will often react by biting or scratching, so be very gentle with them. Try to leave your pets with a veterinarian, family member or friends while you are transitioning back to a regular routine. Pets are naturally inquisitive and could be injured in a damaged home.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- It is important to understand the risk to your safety and health as you prepare to re-enter your home. Do not eat, drink, or inhale fumes from anything that has been near flames, smoke, or soot or water used to put the fire out.
- You may be anxious to clean your home after a fire, but you should first get permission from the proper authorities to safely re-enter your home. Contact your insurance agency immediately after the fire is out. They will provide advice on restoration or replacement of damaged items. If you rent, notify the property owner so that both of you can assess the damage together.
- Some possessions that did not burn may be very wet and covered with soot. Now is the time to remove items that you want so that they may be thoroughly cleaned.
- Firefighters may have cut holes in structure walls or in the roof to search for fire extension or to ventilate, so cleanup will take time.

## **Preventing Further Damage If the Home is Accessible:**

- Get air moving - Open windows to ventilate areas by installing a fan to circulate air.
- Start the drying process of wet items as quickly as possible.
- Use fans and dehumidifiers to dry carpets and draperies. If not thoroughly dried, the carpets and floors underneath may be quickly damaged beyond repair by mold and mildew.
- Cover clean and dry items with plastic while repairs are in progress. If there is substantial water damage, you may need a dehumidifier.
- During wintry weather, if your heating system is operating, the cold air will usually assist in removing moisture. When the heating system is running, change your furnace filter daily until it shows no trace of soot.
- Smoke odor may remain in clothing, upholstered furniture, carpets, and draperies unless they are properly deodorized before cleaning.

## **Additional Resources:**

- Edenton Fire Department - (252) 482-3115
- The American Red Cross - [redcross.org](http://redcross.org)
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency - FEMA
- Salvation Army
- Religious Organizations
- Public Agencies, such as the Public Health Department
- Community Groups
- State or Municipal Emergency Services Office
- Nonprofit Crisis-Counseling Centers

The Fire Department will ensure that utilities such as electricity, gas, and water are safe to use. If they are unsafe, firefighters will have your utilities turned off or disconnected before they leave. Do not try to turn them on yourself.

## **Check List for Next Steps**

- ✓ Visit Edenton Fire Department to request a fire report. This may be required by your insurance company or other agencies.
- ✓ Contact a local disaster relief service such as the American Red Cross if you need assistance. They can assist you in finding a place to stay, food, and clothing. They can also assist you in replacing prescription medications. The American Red Cross provides a great deal of assistance for at least the first 72 hours after a fire and will follow you through recovery.

- ✓ If you have insurance, contact your insurance company quickly. Find out what you should do to keep your home safe until repairs are completed and ask who you should hire to clean and make immediate repairs to your home. If you are not insured, contact local community groups for assistance.
- ✓ Secure your home against further damage; make temporary repairs that are necessary. Save all receipts.
- ✓ List everything that was damaged by the fire. Describe items and try to estimate how much you paid for them.
- ✓ Contact your credit card company to report credit cards that were lost.
- ✓ Take photographs of the damage to substantiate insurance claims. It is a good idea to have two sources of photographs.
- ✓ Check with the fire department to ensure that your home is safe to enter. Be extremely cautious if you decide to go inside as there could be unseen structural damage to your home.
- ✓ Locate safe storage for household items that have been removed from your home.
- ✓ The Fire Department will notify you if your utilities (water, electricity, and gas) are safe to use. If the utilities are turned off, it was determined by the Fire Department that they were not safe to use. Do not turn them back on.
- ✓ Contact your landlord or mortgage company about the fire.
- ✓ Try to find and secure valuable documents and personal records.
- ✓ If you have left your home, call the Edenton Police nonemergency line to inform them that your home will be vacant and unsecured.
- ✓ Save all receipts for any money spent on items related to the fire loss. The receipts may be required for insurance and to prove losses claimed on tax returns. Check with an accountant or the IRS about special benefits for persons recovering from fire loss.

## Rebuilding

**Verify that the contractor rebuilding your home has obtained proper permits and follows all current building, fire and electrical codes for the Town of Edenton and Chowan County.**

- If you are making repairs, carefully follow the instructions provided with tools and equipment to always maintain personal safety. Wear protective equipment such as gloves

and goggles. Wear long sleeves and long pants while performing tasks. Always keep children away while operating power tools.

- When planning construction, ask a professional about having an automatic residential fire sprinkler installed during the construction. It is much less expensive to have sprinklers installed during reconstruction rather than installing them once the home is complete.

**Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. Working smoke alarms give you early warning so that you can get outside quickly.**

- If you are unable to obtain a smoke alarm, the Edenton Fire Department will provide a 10-year battery smoke alarm, free of charge. Call to request the smoke alarm to be installed in your home and to make sure the Fire Department have some available.
- Make sure that smoke alarms are installed in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home, including the basement. Smoke alarms should be interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound.

**This is an opportune time to update your Family Emergency Plan and replenish essential disaster supplies as you are rebuilding your home and life.**

- You will always have comfort knowing that you are prepared and ready for any emergency. Create a home escape plan using the NFPA's home escape plan grid. Practice your home fire escape plan twice a year, making the drill as realistic as possible. Plan in your plan for anyone in your home who has a disability. Be informed about hazards and emergencies that may affect you and your family. Learn where to seek shelter from all types of hazards.
- Consider purchasing homeowner's or renter's insurance.
- Make copies of important documents, such as birth and marriage certificates and insurance policies. Secure your important documents in a safe place using a separate location.

## Supporting Documents

Immediately After the Fire - Guide 160.36 KB