After the Fire
Information and Resources for Recovering from a Fire
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Important Information

Date of Fire: ____________________________
Time of Fire: ____________________________
Location of Fire: ____________________________
Fire Incident Report Number: ____________________________
Fire Investigator: ____________________________
Introduction

Why are there holes in my roof? Why are the windows and doors broken?

Fire produces temperatures of over 1,200 degrees, along with smoke and hot toxic gases. At times, it is necessary to reduce the heat, smoke and hot gases before firefighters can enter a building to put out a fire and rescue any occupants.

Venting the smoke and gases must be done quickly to speed up the rescue effort, as well as to prevent the fire from spreading. Cutting holes in the roof or breaking windows helps with this task.

Often, walls must be forcibly opened to find “hidden” fires. The fire is not out until every “hot spot” is found.

After the fire is out, damage from fighting the fire may appear unnecessary, however, without the use of these firefighting and rescue techniques, lives could be lost and the building could suffer total destruction by fire.
Introduction continued

Can I re-enter my home? What if my house is uninhabitable?

Use caution in re-occupying your home. If it has been severely damaged or contaminated, you may need to find other housing. If you are covered by a homeowner’s insurance policy, you may be eligible for temporary housing. Remember, save any receipts for money you spend related to your fire loss. Your insurance company will want copies in order to reimburse you. These receipts will also be useful for verifying losses claimed on your federal income tax.

Individuals who have experienced a fire or other disaster may obtain assistance from the local American Red Cross. Upon application to the Red Cross, you can obtain food, clothing, lodging and other services. Day or night, call 303.722.7474 and ask for Disaster Services. In addition to the Red Cross, there are other community agencies which may be able to help. Your Red Cross disaster caseworker can assist you in contacting appropriate agencies.

Be sure to notify the following:

- Post Office of your new address
- Bank(s)
- Credit Card Companies
- Aurora Water
- Xcel Energy or other energy companies (gas/electric)
- Social Security Administration (if necessary)
- Children’s schools or childcare
- Aurora Police Department (if your home will be left vacant for any length of time)
Protect Yourself

Use Caution
We know you are anxious to inspect the damage and, if possible, begin to recover your belongings. Please be aware that there may be unseen hazards present.

**Damage:** The building may have suffered structural damage and be physically unsafe to enter. Gas, electrical or plumbing may not be working.

**Toxins:** Smoke and sooty deposits may be present. Toxins may include gases produced in the fire, as well as particles such as asbestos fibers used in some building materials in older homes. Exposure to some of these toxins has been shown to increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer.

**Airborne Contaminants:** Some individuals may be especially sensitive to contaminants or sooty deposits which may be present after a fire. These include babies, small children, older persons, pregnant women and individuals with respiratory conditions.

**Pets:** Pets often become upset and can react in unusual ways after a traumatic event. After a fire, it is best to leave pets with a family member, friend, veterinarian or boarding facility while you are cleaning up your home to avoid injury and further damage.
Re-Entering Your Home

Construction
If the building is structurally damaged to the point that it is not habitable, a building inspector must be called. After the building inspection, a permit must be obtained prior to making repairs. Building Inspection: 303.739.7420.

Utilities
The fire department may have the utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution and also to prevent further damage to the structure and its contents. The procedures for re-establishing utility service are as follows:

Electricity: An electrical inspector must check wiring to be sure it is safe to reconnect power. Contact Scott Berg (Chief Building Official) with the Building Division for an inspection at 303.739.7420. Remember, do not operate wet or damp appliances. Have a service person check them first. Electricity and water do not mix!

Water: Aurora Water service crews are available to restore your service at any time. The emergency number is 303.326.8645. Trash and/or recycling is a responsibility of the individual as the city of Aurora does not pick up trash or recycling. AuroraGov.org has a list of companies who pickup trash/recycling with contact numbers.

Natural Gas: Do not turn the gas back on. An Xcel Energy service person is available 24 hours a day to turn on the gas and re-light appliances for you. Just call 800.995.4999.

Telephone: Contact your telephone company’s business office.
After the Fire

What You Need to Know
After the fire department personnel leave, the building becomes your responsibility. If possible, the fire fighters will secure doors and windows. The final responsibility lies with the owner. Use caution and limit movement in the home to prevent soot and other fire debris from being embedded into upholstery, carpets, curtains and more.

Remove Your Valuables
If it is safe to enter the building, remove all valuables. It is your responsibility to protect against further damage due to weather, theft or vandalism.

Contact Your Insurance Agent
Do this as soon as possible. He or she must be notified of the fire and will be able to help you arrange for immediate repairs. If you cannot reach your agent or have no insurance, you may wish to obtain professional assistance for cleaning. Fire and water damage restoration firms are a good place to start.

Contact Your Manager
If you are a tenant, contact the resident manager or the owner. It is the owner’s responsibility to prevent further loss to the building.
Important Documents

Documents
Below is a list of documents that should be located, if possible, to speed up the process of recovering from a disaster. **NOTE:** It is wise to store all important documents in a fireproof safe, container or cabinet.

- Birth Certificate
- Driver’s License
- Bank Books and Documents
- Mortgage Papers
- Insurance Policies
- Military Discharge Papers
- Passports
- Social Security Cards
- Medicare Cards
- Marriage License
- Divorce Decree
- Credit Cards and Account Numbers
- Titles and Deeds (Home and Auto)
- Stocks and Bonds
- Senior Citizen ID Card
- Medicare Cards
- Wills
- Medical Records
- Warranties
- Income Tax Records
- Automobile Registrations
- Citizenship Paperwork
- Burial Contracts
- Pet Licenses/Animal Registrations
- Death Certificates
- DSHS ID Card*

*Public assistance clients should notify the DSHS office in your area if your ID card is damaged or destroyed. Check the phone book or go online for the office nearest you.*
Documents and Tax Tips

Documents
There are a number of different methods that can be used to dry wet documents. Air Drying, Dehumidifying, Freeze Drying and Vacuum Thermal Drying. Contact a document restoration company immediately for information about the best process in your specific situation.

Property and Income Tax Adjustments
Property which is extensively damaged by fire may qualify for a reevaluation and reduction in your property tax assessment. Information and applications are available from the Aurora Assessor’s Office. Aurora has three different counties. The numbers for the prospective counties are as follows:

- Arapahoe County - 303.795.4600
- Adams County - 303.659.2120
- Douglas County - 303.660.7450

Uninsured Property
Uninsured loss of property, both real and personal, may entitle you to deductions in your income tax. Information is available from the local Internal Revenue Service office, 844.545.5640.
Reclaiming Paper Money, Coin and Savings Bonds

Paper Money, Coins and Savings Bonds
Check with any local commercial bank, the regional Federal Reserve Bank, contact the US Department of the Treasury Bureau of Engraving and Printing and/or the US Mint.

Paper Money
- [www.bep.gov/submitaclaim.html](http://www.bep.gov/submitaclaim.html)
- 1.866.575.2361

Coins
United States Mint
- 1.800.USA.MINT (872.6468)

U.S. Savings Bonds
Call 1.844.284.2676 (toll free) or email SavBonds@bpd.treas.gov to request a Form FS 1048 to replace destroyed bonds. If you don’t know the serial numbers of the destroyed bonds, you will also need form FS 2490.
Medicine, Cosmetics and Food

Medicines and Cosmetics
Medicines and cosmetics exposed to heat or smoke should be thrown away.

Food
Food that was exposed to heat and smoke should be thrown away. Food that was in the freezer that still has ice crystals on it can be used, if not, discard it. Throw away any home-canned products or cans with bulges or dents. Undamaged commercially-canned food may be disinfected before opening by washing with detergent. Rinse in cool, clean water. Disinfect by immersing in a solution of two tablespoons of household bleach per one gallon water. Use a black permanent marker to re-label the can.

Refrigerators and Freezers
Sometimes odors are difficult to remove due to damp insulation which absorbs odor. Here are some cleaning recommendations:

• Defrost and wash all surfaces with water and dishwasher detergent, rinse with two tablespoons baking soda per quart of water, re-rinse with clear water.
• Alternatively, wash with solution of one cup vinegar to one gallon water or with solution of one cup household ammonia to one gallon water.

CLEANING: To help with clean-up after the fire, it is recommended that you hire a professional, commercial fire restoration company.
Contacts and Resources

Aurora Fire Department
Business: 303.326.8999

American Red Cross (Emergency Shelter, Clothing, Food) Disaster Services:
303.722.7474

Aurora Public Utilities
Water: 303.326.8645
Xcel Energy (Electricity): 855.858.9037
Xcel Energy (Natural Gas): 1.800.895.2999
Building Division: 303.739.7420
Xcel Customer Service Line:
1.800.895.4999
Access Aurora: 303.739.7000

Aurora Police Department
Police Dispatch: 303.627.3100
General Information: 303.739.6000
District 1: 303.739.6050
District 2: 303.739.6050
District 3: 303.739.6050

Social Security Administration (Social Security or Medicare Cards):
1.800.772.1213

Property and Income Tax
Destroyed Property: 206.263.2332
Personal Property: 206.296.5126
Internal Revenue Service: 1.844.545.5640
*Ask for a copy of Publication 547: Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Thefts

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration (Citizenship Papers): 1.800.375.5283

Bureau of Records (Birth, Death, Marriage, Divorce Certificates):
303.692.2200

State Department Passport Services (24 hours): 1.877.487.2778

National Personnel Records Center (Military Discharge Papers):
303.604.4740

Aurora Mental Health and Recovery:
303.617.2300

Walk-in Crisis Clinic
2206 Victor St.
Aurora, CO 80045

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