
AFTER THE FIRE



An informational guide to assist you in reducing your losses, and help you quickly return to a normal lifestyle after your life has been affected by a tragic fire

Just a click away...



This document and more information about the Elmira Fire Department are available online at: [**www.cityofelmira.net/fire**](http://www.cityofelmira.net/fire)

AFTER THE FIRE

The Elmira Fire Department hopes that this information will assist you in reducing your losses and help you quickly return to a normal lifestyle.

First, we would like to answer some questions you may have about our fire operations and procedures:

1. Was it necessary to break the windows and put holes in the roof?

As a fire burns, it moves upward, then outward. Removing windows and cutting holes in the roof (ventilation in firefighting terms), stops that damaging outward movement of smoke and heat and enables us to locate potential victims and fight the fire more efficiently, resulting in less damage in the long run. This procedure also reduces the risk of serious injury to firefighters.

2. Why did the firefighters put holes in the walls and ceiling?

We had to be absolutely sure there was no “hidden” fire inside the walls, ceilings, and partitions.

AFTER THE FIRE: INSURANCE CONTACTS

Notify your insurance agent as soon as possible. If you are unable to reach your agent or insurance company, most policies require you to have your home secured against vandalism and looting, and allow advanced funds for your family to find lodging. Keep all receipts, in order to be reimbursed by your insurance company. If possible, do not disturb or remove any items before the insurance adjuster arrives.

Some insurance policies provide for additional living expenses until you are able to move back home. You must keep receipts for all expenditures.

If you are a tenant, contact the resident manager, the owner, or the owner’s insurance agent. It is the owner’s responsibility to prevent further loss to the site. See that your personal belongings are secure either within the building or by moving them to another location, such as the home of a relative or friend. Contact your own insurance agent to report the loss. The property owner’s insurance, in most cases, will not cover the loss of your personal belongings.

Insurance and Other Assistance:

- Contact your insurance company as soon as possible
- If you are renting, contact the property owner or the owner’s insurance company
- If you are not insured, contact your lawyer or the IRS for directions
- Contact the **American Red Cross** for disaster relief services.

If Your Property is NOT Covered by Insurance:

Emergency assistance, including temporary shelter, food, clothing, eye glasses, and medicine is available through the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army.

AFTER THE FIRE: SALVAGE HINTS

Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be a good source of cleaning and restoration of your personal belongings. Companies offering this service can be located in the phone directory.

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 (can be purchased from paint stores)
- 1 cup Lysol or any household chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

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

An effective way to remove mildew is to wash the fresh stain with soap and water. Then rinse and dry in the sun. If the stain isn't gone, use lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

Cooking Utensils:

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc., should be washed with soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powdered cleanser. You can polish copper and brass with a special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.

Electrical Appliances:

Please don't use appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have a service representative check them. This is especially true of electrical appliances. In addition, steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts.

If the fire department turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the electric or gas company to restore these services—do not try to do it yourself. Often a licensed plumber or electrician must make repairs before service can be restored.

Rugs and Carpets:

Rugs and carpets should be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, or vacuuming, and then shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible—lay them flat and expose them to a circulation of warm, dry air. A fan turned on the rugs will speed drying. Even though the surface seems dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can quickly cause the rug to rot.

For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer or installer, or a qualified carpet cleaning professional.

Leather and Books:

Wipe your leather goods with a damp cloth, then with a dry cloth. Stuff your purses and shoes with newspapers to retain their shape. Leave your suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried 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 items. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Books can be dried by placing them on end with pages separated. Then they should be piled and pressed to prevent the pages from crinkling. Alternating drying and pressing will help prevent mildew 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.

Photographs:

Preserving damaged photographs is often very important to victims of fires, floods and other disasters. If photographs are not burned, they can usually be saved. Never try to peel apart photos that have stuck together. Always remember that photographs were originally developed in water solutions and then washed.

Soak the photos in clear, clean water and rinse carefully and thoroughly and let stuck photographs separate on their own. If they stay damp they can be damaged by mold. If you have quantities of wet photos, wrap them in plastic wrap and freeze them, then thaw them and wash them a few at a time. After washing the photos, dry them image side up on a smooth hard surface like a glass table or kitchen counter.

Walls, Floors and Ceilings:

To remove soot and smoke from walls and floors, use a mild soap or detergent or mix together the following solution:

- 4-6 tablespoons trisodium phosphate (can be purchased from paint stores)
- 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

Wear rubber gloves when cleaning with this solution. Be sure to rinse your walls and floors with clear warm water and dry thoroughly after washing them with this solution.

Wash one small area of wall at a time, working from the floor up. Then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last. If the weather allows, open windows and use a fan to circulate air.

Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are completely dry.

Your wallpaper can also be repaired. Use a commercial paste to re-paste a loose edge or section. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be cleansed like any ordinary wall, but care must be taken not to soak the paper. Work from top to bottom to prevent streaking.

Wood Furniture:

Furniture can be cleaned in the same fashion as walls, floors, and ceilings. Do not dry wooden furniture in the sun, as the wood will warp and twist out of shape. Remove drawers and let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you replace them.

AFTER THE FIRE: DOCUMENTS

Documents are very important to your well-being and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire or other disaster. The following documents should be located if possible:

- Birth Certificates
- Credit Cards
- Driver's Licenses
- Title to Deeds
- Bank Books
- Stocks and Bonds
- Insurance Policies
- Wills
- Military Discharge Papers
- Medical Records
- Passports
- Death Certificates
- Payment Books
- Social Security Cards
- Warranties
- Marriage Papers
- Income Tax Records
- Divorce Decree
- Auto Registration
- Citizenship Papers
- Title Cards
- Animal Registration Papers
- Prepaid Burial Contract

A good investment is a fire-proof safe that is UL rated for a minimum of 1 hour at 1700°F. This is usually enough time for firefighters to extinguish a blaze. You will then be able to recover your preserved documents when it is deemed safe.

AFTER THE FIRE: MONEY REPLACEMENT

If your U.S. Savings Bonds have been mutilated or destroyed, write to:

U.S. Treasury Department
Bureau of Loans and Currency
537 W. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60605
ATTN: Bond Consultant

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

Mutilated currency can be mailed or personally delivered to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. A letter should accompany the submitted currency and give the estimated value of the currency and explain how the currency was mutilated. All mutilated currency should be sent by "Registered Mail, Return Receipt Requested" to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Office of Currency Standards
P.O. Box 37048
Washington D.C. 20013

Insuring the shipment is responsibility of the sender.

The Bureau's special currency examiners are usually able to determine the value of mutilated currency when it has been carefully packed and boxed as described below:

- Regardless of the condition of the currency, DO NOT disturb the fragments any more than is absolutely necessary.
- If the currency is brittle or inclined to fall apart, pack it carefully in plastic without disturbing the fragments, and place the package in a secure container.
- If the currency was mutilated in a purse, box, or other container, it should be left in the container to prevent the fragments from further damage.
- If it is absolutely necessary to remove the fragments from the container, send the container along with the currency and any other contents that may have currency fragments attached.
- If the currency was flat when mutilated, do not roll or fold the notes.
- If the currency was in a roll when mutilated, do not attempt to unroll or straighten it out.

If coin or any other metal is mixed with the currency, carefully remove it. Any fused, melted, or otherwise mutilated coins should be sent for evaluation to the:

Superintendent
U.S. Mint
P.O. Box 400
Philadelphia, PA 19105

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Please fill this area in with your local phone numbers and keep copies at locations other than your home.

EMERGENCY

POISON CONTROL

DOCTOR

INSURANCE COMPANY

MEDICAL POLICY NUMBER

HOME POLICY NUMBER

AUTO POLICY NUMBER

GAS / FUEL COMPANY

MUNICIPALITY

BANK

BANK

NEIGHBOR

NEIGHBOR

ACCOUNTANT

FAMILY

FAMILY

AMERICAN RED CROSS

SHELTER / ASSISTANCE

PHARMACY

WORK

WORK

OTHER



City of Elmira

Fire Department

Bureau of Fire Prevention and Inspection Services

101 W. Second Street

Elmira, New York 14901

www.cityofelmira.net

I hereby acknowledge that I have received the informational booklet “AFTER THE FIRE” from the Elmira Fire Department.

Signature

Date: _____

Address: _____