

DISASTER RECOVERY HANDBOOK

Along with any emergency assistance you may receive from the American Red Cross and other community agencies, there are many things you will have to do on your own to recover from your disaster.

We hope this handbook will be of help in your efforts to return your life to normal as soon as possible.

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PROTECTION

Whether you own or rent, the first thing to do after a fire is to protect yourself from additional losses. If you cannot move back in the damaged quarters, remove any valuables. Protect any salvageable items from further damage by weather or theft.

OWNERS vs. RENTERS

If you own the property, board up broken windows and smashed doors. If you rent, the owner should do this for you. This will protect the remaining property and keep out intruders. The owner can be held liable for injuries caused by broken glass or unsafe conditions. Check with the fire department to make sure the utilities are shut off if necessary. Contact the utility companies for assistance in shutting off your water, gas and electric meters. Call the phone company to disconnect your phone.

INSURANCE

If you are insured, **notify your insurance agent as soon as possible**. Make a complete list of your losses - it will help the insurance adjuster and can be used on your tax forms. It is also helpful to take pictures of the damage. Some policies provide coverage for expenses of motels or temporary housing as a result of a disaster.

TAX DEDUCTIONS

If you are not insured, or if your insurance will not cover all your losses, you can take some of the losses off your federal income tax. Most of your loss can be deducted if you keep an accurate list of your fire-related expenses and your losses. For further tax information, contact the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040. Ask for Publication 547, "Nonbusiness Disasters, Casualties & Thefts" and its workbook, Publication 584. Your library may have a copy.

SOCIAL SECURITY/MEDICARE

If your Social Security or Medicare cards were destroyed, contact the local Social Security Administration Office at Duke Forest Place Office Building, 3308 Chapel Hill Boulevard, Durham, NC 27707 or call 1-800-772-1213 for a new Social Security Card. Replacement cards are free.

DISCHARGE PAPERS

For copies of destroyed military discharge papers, obtain VA Form-180 from the Durham County Veteran Service Office located at 200 East Main Street, Durham, NC 27701 or call the VA Regional Office in Winston-Salem: 1-800-827-1000.

MONEY MATTERS/BURNT CURRENCY

If paper money has been only slightly damaged or at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the bill is in fair condition, you can probably get it replaced at your local bank. As a last resort, you, your bank, or insurance company can send pieces of currency to:

Treasury of the United States
Main Treasury Building, Room 1123
Washington, D.C. 20220

Send money registered mail or registered parcel post. Request a return receipt if sending large sums of money. You will receive forms to fill out from the Treasury.

SAVINGS BONDS

To replace United States Savings Bonds, or collect your cash and interest contact:

Federal Reserve Bank
Fiscal Paying Agency
Richmond, Virginia 23200

Give the name(s) and address on the bonds and the denominations and number of bonds. They will try to speed things up if you tell them you are a disaster victim. Your bank should also be able to provide information.

CHECKBOOKS AND CREDIT CARDS

If you cannot find your checkbook, blank checks, or savings account book after the fire, **notify your bank immediately**. Close your accounts and transfer funds to a new account number. You need to give the bank an address where they can mail you your new checks or savings book, or you will have to make arrangements to pick them up.

The same goes for credit cards - **call the bank or company immediately**. If someone finds the card and uses it, you can be held liable for up to \$50. Close the account and have the bank/company issue you a new card with a different number. Follow up the phone call with a letter as soon as possible. Your library can help you find credit card company phone numbers and addresses.

BIRTH / DEATH / MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES, PROPERTY DEEDS AND DIVORCE PAPERS ISSUED IN DURHAM COUNTY

Copies of birth and death certificates issues in Durham County can be obtained from:

Health Department, Vital Records Section
414 East Main Street
Durham, NC 27702
Phone: 560-7670

Copies of marriage certificates and property deeds issued and recorded in Durham County can be obtained from:

Register of Deeds
200 East Main Street, PO Box 1107
Durham, NC 27702
Phone: 560-0493

Copies of divorce decrees issued in Durham County can be obtained from:

Clerk of Superior Court
Civil Judgement – Third Floor
201 East Main Street, PO Box 1772
Durham, NC 27707
Phone: 560-6831

There is a small fee for the replacement of any/all of these documents.

NON-DURHAM BIRTH, DEATH AND MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES

Copies of birth, death and marriage certificates, or divorce decrees issued elsewhere in North Carolina may be obtained from the city or county where they were originally issued or from:

Division of Health and Services – Vital Records
Cooper Building
225 North McDowell Street, PO Box 29537
Raleigh, NC 27626-0537
Phone: (919) 733-3526, Fax: (919) 733-1511

For copies of birth, death and marriage certificates, or divorce decrees issued outside of North Carolina, contact the city or county seat where they were originally issued or that state's vital records department. There will be a replacement fee for documents. Your library can help find telephone numbers and/or addresses. Call the Durham County Library reference desk at 560-0110.

SAVING FOOD

Usually, traces of odor will not affect frozen food if it is wrapped securely. Fruits can be refrozen if they taste and smell good. Do not refreeze thawed vegetables. **If fire-fighting water is in your food, throw it away.** Even canned food may spoil in a fire.

SMOKE ODOR

To remove smoke odor or soot from washable clothes, (except those which should not be bleached) try this formula:

4 to 6 cups tri-sodium phosphate (Spic and Span)
1 cup Lysol (or household chlorine bleach)
1 gallon water

Rinse with clear water and dry thoroughly. The formula can also be used for walls, furniture or floors.

WASHABLE CLOTHING

If washable clothes are wet or damp, wash them immediately to avoid mildew. To remove mildew, wash the fresh stains with soap and water, rinse well and dry. If stain remains use lemon juice and salt. Test colored garments before using. If soot, mildew or smoke odor remains and you think the clothing still might be saved, try a professional laundry - they have special solutions for treating fire-damaged clothing. **It is important to get the clothes to the laundry as quickly as possible so that the stains or odor doesn't set too deeply.**

DRY CLEANING

Dry cleaners have chemicals to treat soot, water damage, and smoke odors. Get the clothing to the cleaner as soon as possible. If you are delayed, remove shoulder pads or trimmings that might bleed. Soak clothing for a short period in cold water with a small amount of synthetic detergent. Rinse in cold water, gently squeeze out water, shake to avoid wrinkling, and fasten to a hanger to dry completely in cold air. Afterwards shake or brush off as much dirt as possible.

LEATHER

Remove surface dirt from leather, wash in cold water, and wipe dry. Stuff shoes and purses with crumpled paper. Dry in normal air away from heat and sun. When dry, clean with saddle soap. Paste-type neutral floor wax, or other commercially available finishes may be used as a final polish. Rinse leather or suede jackets in cold water, then dry away from heat.

BLANKETS

Shake and brush surface dirt from blankets. Use manufacturer's directions if available. Otherwise, soak without agitation for 15 minutes in lukewarm detergent suds. Turn 2 or 3 times by hand. Spin off water, and repeat if necessary. Rinse 2 or 3 times in lukewarm clear water, spinning off water after each rinsing. Dry in either a preheated dryer with some hot bath towels, or hang the blankets over two parallel lines. If you use a dryer, remove blankets while damp and finish drying on two lines. Gently stretch blanket into shape, and finish by brushing the blanket and ironing the trimming.

PILLOWS

Feather pillows: Open opposite seams of ticking 2 inches, turn edges in, and fasten with safety pins so water can circulate. Wash same as blanket. Do not put pillows through wringer. Shake up feathers while drying.

Fiber pillows: Same as feather pillows, but flush water by compressing pillow – do not wring or twist.

Foam rubber or Urethane pillows: Soak in cool water, then wash in warm water with gentle agitation. Rinse well, and gently squeeze or spin. Do not dry in dryer.

WALLS

For soot, wash down thoroughly with detergent. For smoke odor, use the cleaning solution listed under ‘SMOKE ODOR’ in this booklet. For water damage, wash down walls while still wet if this is possible. If damage is substantial, it will be necessary to use a primer coat before painting. Vinyl primers are excellent for this purpose. Plaster and stucco walls can be repaired while still damp – consult a local paint store for instructions. **DO NO PAINTING UNTIL WALLS ARE THOROUGHLY DRY.**

LINOLEUM AND TILE

If water seeps under the linoleum it will cause bad odors and begin to warp floors after several days. If this happens, remove the entire sheet. If the linoleum is brittle, a heat lamp will soften it so it can be rolled up without breaking. If carefully removed, it can be re-cemented after the floor has thoroughly dried. A new sheet of felt liner will be needed. Small blisters in linoleum can be punctured with a nail and re-cemented if you are careful. Dilute regular linoleum paste thin enough to go through a hand syringe, and shoot the adhesive through the nail hole. Weigh down the linoleum with bricks or boards. It is usually possible to cement loose tiles of any type. Wait until the floor is completely dry before changing.

FLOORS

Wood that is under water for any length of time will expand. When floors are buckling badly, take up trim board, then remove one board along each edge of the floor. The wood will shrink back to normal size after the floor dries.

CLEANING RUGS

If your rug has been soaked and soiled, let it dry out thoroughly. Clean by beating, sweeping or using a vacuum cleaner. If necessary shampoo with a commercial rug cleaner (or by using the following homemade solution: mix 2 tablespoons dish detergent with 1 cup of water. Take ¼ cup of this at a time and beat with an eggbeater.) Apply with a shampooing machine, following directions. (If you are using the homemade solution, apply with a soft brush, using a circular motion. Wipe with a soft cloth dampened with lukewarm water. Use as little water as possible. Use towels or other absorbent material to blot up moisture. Clean one small area at a time. Continue until the entire rug is finished. Continue until the whole rug is finished.) Dry the rugs as quickly as possible. Leave large rugs on the floor or spread them on a porch. A fan will help speed the drying. Make sure the rug is thoroughly dry. Any moisture at the base of the rug will quickly rot the tufts, causing rug to fall apart.

RE-SIZING RUGS

After cleaning, some machine rugs need to be re-sized to make them lie flat on the floor. Dissolve ½ pound of granulate glue in one gallon of boiling water. Put newspapers on a flat surface. Put the rug upside-down on the papers, and tack the rug to the surface. With a whiskbroom, brush the hot glue over the back of the rug and let it dry thoroughly.

APPLIANCES

Turning on appliances that have been soaked by water before they are properly cleaned could damage them further. Do not operate washers, refrigerators, etc. until a qualified serviceperson has checked them. Take small appliances to a dealer handling that brand – they are in the best position to help you. Often a local repairperson can recondition small appliances by cleaning and oiling them.

REFRIGERATOR

To remove odors from refrigerators or freezers, use detergent and warm water, or the “SMOKE ODOR” solution in this booklet. Wipe with a damp cloth and then wipe dry. If odor remains try solutions of:

1 teaspoon baking soda to one quart water,

OR; 1 cup vinegar to one gallon water,

OR; 1 cup household ammonia to one gallon water

You may also leave charcoal (activated is the best) in the freezer for a time to help get rid of remaining odor.

REPAIRING FURNITURE

If you have insurance that covers fire or water damaged furniture, it may be better to apply the allowance on new articles rather than try to repair furniture. If you are going to repair, plan ahead and consider the cost of necessary equipment such as glue, clamps and finishings.

To repair water soaked furniture, take it outside and remove as many drawers and other parts as possible. Do not force drawers out. Clean off soot and dirt, using a hose if needed. Wash with mild suds or the “SMOKE ODOR” cleaning formula. Wipe a clean, damp cloth, and then wipe dry. Dry furniture INDOORS – if it dries quickly in the sun it will warp and twist. Gluing will repair some furniture – if not, use nails or screws.

If there are white spots on the finish, moisten a cloth in a solution of ½ cup ammonia and ½ cup water. Wring the cloth and rub the furniture. Wipe dry immediately. You can also try one part turpentine to one part linseed oil. Another method is rubbing the furniture with a 4/0 steel wool pad dipped in liquid polishing wax, and then buffing. Small spots can sometimes be removed by moistening a cloth with camphorated oil or oil of peppermint. Sometimes a drop of ammonia on a damp cloth will do the job.

Dry upholstered furniture as quickly as possible to prevent mildew and rotting. Brush off dirt and shampoo if necessary with a solution of ¼ cup of powdered detergent mixed in one quart of hot water. Apply the suds only (not the water) with a sponge or soft brush. Do a small section at a time, and try not to soak the padding. Remove the suds with a sponge or damp cloth, and blot dry. Brush pile fabric in one direction. When completely dry, brush or vacuum up the residue. For badly damaged furniture, stuffing may have to be replaced. Dry the frame completely before reupholstering.

YOU SHOULD HAVE A SMOKE DETECTOR!

Home fires are a serious threat to your family's safety. More than 6,000 people die and over 300,000 are injured each year by fire in homes. Many home fire injuries and deaths are caused by smoke, not flames.

Many deaths and injuries occur in fires that happen at night while victims are asleep. But there is a way to wake up people before they are overcome by smoke – the home smoke detector, available at many stores ranging in cost from \$10 and \$50.

- There should be at least one smoke detector on each floor of your home – preferably outside of bedrooms.
- Change batteries twice a year. When you change your clocks at Daylight Savings Time, change your smoke detector batteries.
- On occasion, vacuum out dust in smoke detector.

For information regarding smoke detectors contact the City of Durham Fire Department at 560-4242, or your local fire station.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Available to residents of Durham and Granville counties faced with emergencies due to home fires. Our services include:

**TEMPORARY HOUSING • FOOD • CLOTHING • RENT •
PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES • REFERRALS**

American Red Cross

Central North Carolina Chapter
4737 University Drive, PO Box 52509
Durham, NC 27717-2509
(919) 489-6541 • FAX (919) 493-5272

24 HOUR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE: 489-9707

Disaster Action Teams are made up of trained, dedicated volunteers who respond to the scene of a fire and provide the immediate emergency needs of temporary housing, food and clothing.

We know how stressful fires and other disasters can be. We want to lessen your burden by taking the guesswork out of locating available resources. After the disaster occurs make an appointment to meet with a Red Cross caseworker (489-6541) who will assess and verify your needs, make appropriate referrals, and provide other assistance.

The American Red Cross is located at 4737 University Drive
0.8 miles west of South Square Mall
on the DATA bus Blue Line

Red Cross aid is an outright gift. It is provided for by voluntary contributions from the American people.