

AFTER A FIRE

Resources to
Assist Recovery



Toronto Fire Services **Tel: 416-338-9050** www.toronto.ca/fire

A Message from Toronto Fire Services

Recovering after a fire may be one of the most difficult things you ever have to do. Nothing will prepare you for the devastation and loss which can occur and the feelings of fear and anxiety that you may experience.

This information booklet was designed to assist you and hopefully make the process of recovery a bit easier by providing information and resources on emergency housing; recovering lost documents; salvaging furniture and appliances; dealing with your insurance company; food and medicine and cleaning up. It takes you through the many tasks you need to do step-by-step to restore your life and home back in order.

Your road to recovery will take time and it is very important that you seek out help from others to assist you along the way. Take things one step at a time to prevent being overwhelmed.

Toronto Fire Services hopes this booklet will be of benefit to you on your journey to recovery.

Who We Are & What We Do

Toronto has the largest fire service in Canada and the fifth largest in North America serving the **2.8 million** people of the city and its visitors.

Toronto Fire Services is the City's only all hazards emergency response organization. TFS provides City of Toronto residents, visitors and businesses with protection against loss of life, property and the environment from the effects of fire, illness, accidents, and all other hazards through preparedness, prevention, public education, and emergency response with an emphasis on quality services, efficiency, effectiveness, and safety.

The First Step of Recovery

Completing these steps prior to leaving your property is recommended:

- If you need help with emergency shelter, food or clothing, inform a member of Toronto Fire Services as you may be eligible for immediate assistance. We have many humanitarian organizations available to us and can connect you with the assistance you may need (i.e. Salvation Army, Red Cross, Toronto Police Victim Services, etc.)
- To access an emergency shelter you can also call:
 - **3-1-1**
 - **416-338-4766** for the Central Intake Helpline (24 hours, seven days a week)
 - **416-392-0090** for the Assessment and Referral Centre - Streets to Home.
(129 Peter Street - Walk In Services 9 – 11:30am) www.toronto.ca/housing
- If you rent or lease, contact the building owner or building manager.
- If you are insured, contact your Insurance Company right away as many policies are set up to temporarily provide you with food, shelter and clothing while your home is being repaired.

- If your Insurance Company requires you to obtain a Fire Report from Toronto Fire Services:
 - Apply online at www.toronto.ca/fire
 - Under Fire Incidents, click on “Request an Incident Report”
 - Download and fill out the Emergency Incident Report Request form
 - There is a **\$78.40** fee for Fire Incident Reports payable to the City of Toronto (cheque/money order)
 - Form and fee should be mailed to:
**Toronto Fire Services
Incident Reports/RMS Section
4330 Dufferin Street
Toronto, ON M3H 5R9**

- If Toronto Fire Services agrees that it is safe for you to enter your home we will accompany you so that you are able to remove any essential items:
 - Important legal documents, passports, birth certificates
 - Important medicines
 - Insurance policies, money, credit cards, cheque books, sentimental items, cell phones
 - Eyeglasses, hearing aids
- If you rent the home, request the landlord/ property manager to secure your property. If you own your own home, then you are responsible for your home's security:
 - Board up broken windows and doors
 - Cover holes in the roof or exterior walls
 - Drain your water lines if your home will not be heated for a period of time (or ask a Contractor to do this for you)
 - Your Insurance Company will also be able to provide you with a few reputable Contractors, or you can search for services yourself listed under 'Fire and Water Damage Restoration' at [yellowpages.ca](https://www.yellowpages.ca)

Getting Settled Elsewhere

Housing

If you cannot live in your home due to fire damage and you cannot stay with family or friends, a temporary home will be needed for you and your family. It may be best to keep all family members together for mutual support and in order to communicate openly to permit an outlet for the stress/trauma of the incident.

Pets

If a pet is lost or escapes during the fire, try walking through the neighbourhood and calling out your pet's name since they may be injured and/or hiding in an adjacent property. You can also try calling your local animal shelter or veterinarian, place an ad in your community newspaper and distribute flyers to your neighbours.

Toronto Humane Society (416) 392-2273

www.torontohumanesociety.com/

Etobicoke Humane Society (416) 249-6100

www.etobicokehumanesociety.com/

Toronto Animal Services (416) 338-7297 (PAWS)

www.toronto.ca/animal_services/lost_pets.htm

Others to Consider Notifying . . .

Even if you are away from your home for a short period, you may wish to contact the following to report a temporary change of address:

- Family and Friends
- Employer
- Canada Post (for mail redirection)
- Bank (report cheques/credit cards/debit cards left in residence)
- Schools
- Newspapers, Magazines, other subscriptions
- Utility Providers (Hydro, Gas, Telephone, Internet, Cable)

Going Back Home

Prior to re-entering the home, you must obtain permission from Toronto Fire Services (if still on scene) or the assigned Building Inspector. If the building remains unsafe, you may not receive permission to enter. If there is an ongoing fire investigation, you must obtain the permission of the designated fire investigator with the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office.

a. Ontario Fire Marshal's Office

Daytime: (8:30 am – 5:00 pm) 1-800-565-1842

After Hours: 1-800-461-2281

b. City of Toronto: Building Division

Inspections – General Customer Service Inquiries **(416) 397-5330**

Toronto and East York District **(416) 338-0700**

North York District **(416) 395-7541**

Etobicoke York District **(416) 394-8055**

Scarborough District **(416) 396-7322**

- If you have received permission to enter your home, you may require some of these pieces of equipment to help you: *Flashlight, Dust Mask, First Aid Kit, Hard Hat and Gloves, Hard Soled Shoes, Camera, Video Recorder, Crow Bar, Hammer, Hack Saw, Trash Bags*

- Walk around your property to check for any problems or hazards. If there are **loose power lines or electrical wires**, stay away from them. If you notice a natural gas odour (similar to rotten egg) call your gas company right away, and do not enter your home.
- If it is safe to enter the home, walk around carefully and use caution when checking for hazards. If you **smell or hear natural gas** (it can make a hissing/blowing sound) leave the building immediately and call 9-1-1.
- If it is safe, try to locate your main electrical box to ensure that the power has been shut off. If you must **walk through water to reach the box, refrain from doing this**. Instead, call an Electrician. **Remember: water and electricity are a fatal combination.**
- If your **utilities have been disconnected**, do not attempt to reconnect it yourself – you must call the appropriate utility company to have them reconnected
- **Hazardous Materials** should be disposed if they have been exposed to flames, heat, moisture or smoke
www.toronto.ca/garbage/hhw
- If you find evidence of money/bonds that have been partially destroyed by fire, gather up all evidence of the notes, any ashes and the container that they were originally in. Even the smallest amount of evidence will assist in determining the amount of money. Provide a letter with all of the specific details (amount of money/ bonds you believe were destroyed) and how it occurred. Send your letter to:
Mutilated Notes Services, Bank of Canada, 234 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa, ON K1A 0G9
- For further information phone 1-800-303-1282 or go to:
www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/contaminated-and-mutilated-bank-notes/

Dealing with Food and Medicine

Any food that survived the fire will need to be closely assessed – **if in doubt, throw it out!** Heat, smoke, and toxic fumes will cause food and medicine to spoil, making them extremely dangerous to consume. Any perishable foods or pre-packaged foods and food/medicine exposed to smoke, water, heat or fumes needs to be discarded.

Any foods in canned jars should be discarded as there is a chance that the seal may have been broken due to the heat.

Any canned food that is bulging, badly dented or rusted should be discarded. Cans that have not been exposed to direct heat can be cleaned in a solution of 45 ml of bleach mixed with 4 litres of water.

If power to your refrigerator or freezer was disrupted, discard all food (if you are not sure, throw them out anyway). Food that has remained frozen should be fine, unless your freezer was exposed to intense heat.

Check with a pharmacist or doctor prior to taking any medicine that has been exposed to heat, water, smoke, or fumes. Make sure to dispose of the medicine properly if it is necessary.

Cleaning Up After a Fire

- Before you begin, contact your insurance agent since your home policy might cover the cost of a Fire Restoration Specialist, saving you time, stress and money
- Keep any ruined furniture, appliances and personal belongings aside (storage facility/garage) for insurance purposes
- Decide ahead of time what is worth saving since items can take numerous cleanings to rid them of soot and smoke
- You may need extra space to clean your belongings and to store them
- Some cleaning solutions are hazardous – use rubber gloves and goggles, and never use these solutions near children, pets, or an open flame (i.e. water heater)
- Make sure to open windows so that you have adequate ventilation – or clean outdoors
- Keep soiled rags and cloths in a metal container with a tight fitting lid
- NEVER mix cleaning solutions

Tips for cleaning up on your own:

- Smoke, odours and black soot may require many cleanings – try placing small dishes of vinegar, vanilla or activated charcoal around your home to absorb odours. If you are having difficulties with this, consult the advice of a professional (Fire and Water Damage Restoration)
- Vacuum all surfaces with a dry and wet vacuum
- Have your heating ducts cleaned by a professional
- Seal your rooms with plastic sheeting so that soot will not travel from room to room

- **Walls and wallpaper** can be cleaned with Tri-sodium Phosphate (available at your local hardware and paint supply stores) chlorine bleach or a mixture of a cleanser (Lysol) diluted with water
- Wash from the floor up, leaving the ceilings for last
- Wallpaper is often not salvageable – if you discover that yours is worth saving, heat and ventilate the room for several days to dry the paper and plaster and then clean from the bottom up
- **Wooden furniture** should be cleaned without chemicals
- Clean dirt and then remove all drawers so that they completely dry (to avoid warping)
- Scrub surfaces with a stiff brush and cleaning solution for wood (like Murphy's Oil Soap) and then let the pieces dry (do not place in the sun as it may warp/bleach the wood)
- If your furniture developed mold, clean with a solution of boric acid and water (as per the package instructions)
- To remove water or smoke film, clean with a cloth soaked in an equal mix of water and household ammonia, dry and then wax
- Fine antiques or reproductions should be referred to a professional
- **Subfloors** that have absorbed water may warp
- Remove tiles, hardwood planks, linoleum etc. and let the floor dry thoroughly before you replace the flooring
- To clean your hardwood floors, tiles or linoleum, use a good quality floor cleaner and clean them multiple times to remove heavy soot or stains
- Strip wax if necessary and restain
- **Rugs and carpets** will require immediate drying since moisture left in the fabric can lead to rotting
- Lay rugs flat and expose them to warm, dry air – try aiming a fan directly at them

- After they dry, rugs can be swept, beaten, vacuumed and shampooed if necessary
- Wall to wall carpets can be cleaned with a commercial steam cleaning machine to remove dirt and water
- A mix of one part white vinegar to two parts water in the cleaning machine can help to minimize odours
- **Mattresses & Pillows** are usually not worth saving, however, if you must use your mattress, dry it thoroughly in the sun and cover with plastic sheeting before using
- **Clothing stained** with soot and smoke sometimes never comes clean, however, you can try:
 - Soaking clothes in household ammonia (125 ml) mixed with 8 litres of water, and then rinse in 250 ml of vinegar
 - Dry-cleaning wool, silk and rayon
 - Removing mildew by washing with soap and water, then rinsing and drying well
 - Soaking badly stained garments in 125 ml of household bleach and 3 litres of warm water or sprinkling with salt and applying the juice of one squeezed lemon
- **Wet or damaged appliances** should be checked by a professional technician prior to use
- Appliances like stoves and fridges can be cleaned with a solution of baking soda and water or a mixture of vinegar or household ammonia with 4.5 litres of water
- Place an open box of baking soda inside fridge to absorb odours
- **Cooking utensils** can be cleaned with hot, soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine powdered cleanser
- **Copper and brass** can be polished with a specialty polish - salt sprinkled on a lemon or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar

- **Books and documents can be dried by standing them up with pages fanned open**
- **Wet pages** can be dried by sprinkling them with cornstarch or talc and then brushing the pages clean later
When books are dried, pile and press them to prevent pages from crinkling
- Important documents should be sharp frozen (look in Yellow Pages for meat cutting businesses that offer flash freezing services)
- **Leather goods** can be wiped with a clean cloth and then dried with a dry cloth
- Stuff bags and shoes with newspaper to help them retain their shape, and when dry, they can be cleaned with Saddle Soap
- **Locks and hinges** should be taken apart, cleaned with kerosene and then oiled

Dealing With Critical Incident Stress

- Critical incident stress is any incident that makes you experience unusually strong emotional reactions
- The incident may even be long over before you feel the strong emotional/physical reactions
- The feelings are normal, especially when you are dealing with the situation honestly and realistically
- Sometimes the aftershocks can occur right after the traumatic event, or they can occur days, weeks, or years later
- Depending on the severity of the event, these symptoms can appear and disappear quickly or last a long time
- Sometimes the trauma has been so painful that you may require professional help from a counsellor trained to deal with this type of stress
- **Some common signs and signals of a stress reaction:**
 - Fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, rapid heart rate, twitches, headaches, blurred vision, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, chills, chest pain, difficulty breathing, elevated blood pressure, anxiety, nervousness, anger, grief, denial, panic, fear, depression, uncontrolled emotions, irritability, loneliness, helplessness, sleep disturbances, increased alcohol consumption
- **Tips on Dealing with Stress:**
 - Take care of yourself and your loved ones since you are going through a very difficult time and you may experience unpleasant emotions
 - If you can, reduce your responsibilities so that you can give yourself enough recovery time
 - Get enough sleep – nightmares are common and may disrupt your normal sleep patterns
 - If your sleeping difficulties last longer than a week, consult a doctor
 - Exercise can help calm your mind and help you sleep at night
 - Be sensitive to how children may react – they may become clingy and fearful

- In any traumatic experience they need your reassurance that everything will be okay
- When the time is right, empower your children by giving them the information they need to protect themselves
- Call **3-1-1** to obtain Fire and Life Safety information from Toronto Fire Services Public Education Section, or visit our website at **toronto.ca/fire/prevention**
- **Counselling Services: call 416-408-HELP to access the Distress Centres of Toronto**
- **Online assistance at www.torontodistresscentre.com**
- **Toronto Public Health can also assist you with support at 416-338-7600 or online at www.toronto.ca/health**
- **Call Telehealth Ontario for general health information or advice at 1-866-797-0000**

General Information and Referral Numbers

2 1 1 Findhelp Information Services www.211Ontario.ca

3 1 1 (24/7) TTY 416-338 OTTY (0889) www.toronto.ca/311

CANADIAN RED CROSS

Provides emergency lodging, food, clothing and personal services for 72 hours)

416-480-2500

Toll free 1-877-338-3398

COUNSELLING SERVICES

Toronto Distress Centres – confidential help line available 24 hours providing emotional support, crisis intervention, suicide prevention and linkage to emergency help when necessary.

416-408 HELP (4357) www.torontodistresscentre.com

TORONTO PUBLIC HEALTH Mon – Fri 8:30 – 4:30pm

During an emergency, emotional and mental stress may trigger feelings of being overwhelmed and unsafe – Toronto Public Health’s Community Crisis Support Team can help.

416-338-7600

TTY 416-392-0658 www.toronto.ca/health email: publichealth@toronto.ca

DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK

416-203-0050

ENBRIDGE GAS

1-866-763-5427 (24/7)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Toronto Employment and Social Services – can provide emergency financial assistance

416-392-2956 www.toronto.ca/socialservices

INSURANCE BUREAU OF CANADA

Contact your insurance broker or company directly, or call Insurance Bureau of Canada - provides impartial information and direction for inquiries about property and auto insurance

416-362-9528

www.consumercentre@ibc.ca 1-800-387-2880

SALVATION ARMY

Offers emergency housing, transportation, food, clothing, emotional and spiritual support, both in the response and recovery phase.

416-425-2111

www.salvationarmy.ca 1-800-725-2769

Email: john_mcalister@can.salvationarmy.org

SERVICE CANADA

Replacing passport, social insurance number or permanent resident card

1-800-622-6232

TTY 1-800-926-9105

www.servicecanada.gc.ca

TELEHEALTH ONTARIO

General health information or advice

1-866-797-000

TTY 1-866-797-0007

TORONTO ANIMAL SERVICES

416-338 PAWS (7297)

www.toronto.ca/animalservices

ANIMAL CONTROL

416-338-7387

TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY

1-800-641 kind (5463)

TORONTO HYDRO

416-542-8000 (PRESS 1)

Where can I Replace my Important Documents and Money?

Item	Saved	Need to Replace	Where can I Replace Items	Done
Birth Certificate			Ontario Government Issued Certificates Birth/Death/Marriage 416-325-8305 Toll free 1-800-461-2156 www.canadacertificates.com	
Death Certificate				
Marriage Certificate				
Divorce / Adoption Papers			Court where decree was filed for divorce Lawyer/Court that ordered adoptive record	
Driver's Licence			Service Ontario Office	
Vehicle Registration				
Insurance Policies			Contact Insurance Agent	
Citizenship Papers / Permanent Residency Cards			Government of Canada www.cic.gc.ca/english/information	
Passports			Service Canada	

Item	Saved	Need to Replace	Where can I Replace Items	Done
Income Tax Papers			Revenue Canada	
Wills			Contact your Lawyer	
Medical Information			Contact your Doctor	
OHIP Card			Service Ontario Office	
Medical Insurance			Provincial Medical Services Plan	
Social Insurance Cards			Service Canada Office SIN/CPP/EI CPP 1-800-277-9914 EI 1-800-206-7218 Canada Centre 200 Town Centre Court, Floor 1 Scarborough, ON	
Canada Pension Plan				
Employment Insurance				
Children's Services & Social Assistance Information/Assistance				Your Case Worker or Children's Services 416-392-5437 or 311
Land Titles			Land Registry Office 416-314-4430 or 311	
Titles to Deeds				
Pet Registration Papers			Animal Control 416-338-7387	

Vital Information

Date of fire:

Time of fire:

Location of fire:

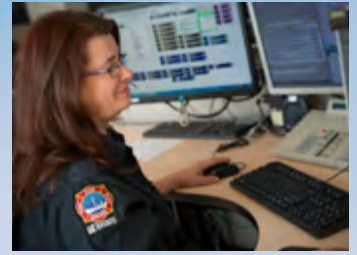
Vehicle identification number for cars:

Trucks and motorcycles destroyed:

Toronto Fire Services: 416-338-9050

Fire Incident Report Number issued:

Fire Marshal or Fire Investigator:



Connect with us

Toronto Fire Services hopes this booklet and the information provided has been useful to you. Do not hesitate to use the resources available. If you have any further questions, concerns or require any assistance, please connect with us using any of the links below.

 toronto.ca/fire

 Toronto Fire Services

 @Toronto_Fire

 TFStalk@toronto.ca

 Toronto Fire Services

 (416) 338-9050 or 311

Toronto Fire Services
4330 Dufferin Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3H 5R9
Tel: 416-338-9050
www.toronto.ca/fire